

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PLANTERS, MARINERS, NABOBS, AND SQUIRES:
MASCULINE TYPES AND IMPERIAL IDEOLOGY, 1719-1817

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

DECEMBER 2015

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ABSTRACT

On 1 December 1783, Edmund Burke delivered an impassioned speech in the House of Commons, urging Parliament to reform the East India Company, which Burke argued was ruling Bengal with venality, cruelty, and corruption. If Parliament failed to act, Burke cautioned, not only would Britain's Indian subjects suffer the consequences but so would Britain itself: "as English youth in India drink the intoxicating draught of authority and dominion before their heads are able to bear it . . . neither nature nor reason have any opportunity to exert themselves for remedy of the excesses of their premature power." Burke's fear that the imperial project was corrupting the moral pedagogy of young British men – "the boys we send to India" – illustrates the intricate links in the British imagination between empire and masculinity, a pairing that this dissertation explores in the context of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century literature. As a range of writers with diverse social and political allegiances attempted to make sense of the unfolding imperial modernity, two questions appeared inseparable: what it meant to rule an increasingly vast, transoceanic empire and what it meant to become a man, specifically a gentleman. The enormous wealth sailing up the Thames from colonies abroad was radically transforming historical modes of gentlemanly authority, allowing boys and young men the alluring possibilities of radical self-transformation and social ascendancy as old paradigms of title and consanguinity slowly gave way to cunning, industry, and capital. Yet Burke's warning to the Commons hints at a darker obverse to these enticing prospects – the idea of imperial man becoming not a virtuous, right-feeling gentleman of the settled Whig order but a capricious tyrant who threatened the very foundations of that order.

Although I take as my object of inquiry the eighteenth-century gentleman – that allegedly hegemonic masculine typology – my work develops, as well as contests, recent accounts by

critics such as Nancy Armstrong, Felicity Nussbaum, and Srinivas Aravamudan. These studies have greatly expanded our understanding of the central role of women, members of the non-propertied classes, and colonial subjects in the ideologies and historical-political struggles of the age. By renewing attention upon the British gentleman, I argue that even within the most idealized, authorized versions of masculine identity, the ambivalences and upheavals brought about by imperial modernity roil just below the surface. While Erin Mackie has compellingly written that the British gentleman of the latter half of the eighteenth century worked to revise “patriarchal power as paternalistic benevolence,” I demonstrate that producing a coherent account of authority in a beneficent modernity while perpetually referring backwards to premodern, absolutist patriarchy was a balancing act always already on the verge of collapse. The heroes of empire that my chapters explore do not succeed in assuaging the trauma and anxieties of the imperial world so much as they do in registering the weight of those tensions.

The arc of the dissertation encompasses four masculine types, emblematic of the period, to assess how the interplay between representations of masculinity and imperial ideology transformed over the century. But I also assess striking commonalities that illuminate the evolving set of discourses these figures sought to reconcile. My first chapter treats Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), a novel generally understood as oriented emphatically around a Whig view of commerce and empire but riddled with Crusoe’s repeated assertions of absolutist patriarchalism (an ideology anathema to Defoe as a political writer). I focus on these frequently overlooked and easily dismissed moments to uncover the serious moral and ethical dilemmas colonialism raised even at this early period. This chapter argues that Defoe sets these assertions against the novel’s Whig and proto-capitalist ethos to suggest the creeping tyranny that could develop in young men abroad, laboring far from the civilizing constraints of British society. At

one level, Defoe's novel presents the colony as a potentially liberating location (for Europeans), where the man of industry and capital could rethink and rearticulate his social and political identity. However, *Robinson Crusoe* also presents the colony as a profound threat to classical-liberal modernity – a wild and ominous space where the Old World's despotic political demons threaten to reemerge in European colonists. Masculinity in Defoe's novel is thus a site of possibility and a lens through which to critique the drives and desires that made empire so alluring. The anxieties that grow out of this opposition are present throughout the texts my subsequent chapters take up, although the ways in which these anxieties manifest shift with changing historical circumstance and location.

Chapter Two reads Tobias Smollett's *Roderick Random* (1748) alongside Henry Fielding's magnum opus, *Tom Jones* (1749), as it works toward a theory of how the eighteenth-century novel reenvisioned squirearchy. I contend that Smollett and Fielding both conceive gentlemanliness as a social performance and that, especially for Smollett, this performativity at once allows for a liberating self-fashioning and throws into question the nature of masculine agency itself. The two novels explore a moral and behavioral pedagogy that ostensibly enables the modern would-be gentleman to persuasively inhabit his social position and gain control over his economic destiny by mastering a gendered performance; but these novels are also subtended by a fear that gentlemanly authority so founded becomes show without substance. The retention and revision of a premodern, patriarchalist identity symbolized by the English squire or Scottish laird serves as a means of defending an upper-class masculinity conceived as traditional and more concretely agential even as the conceptual underpinnings of this patriarchalism are put under tremendous pressure. In Smollett, the telos of the gentleman ensconced in his country seat and removed from the sphere of imperial commerce reads as the reward for successful

participation in the imperial project, which also promises to confer British-gentlemanly status on young men of the Celtic periphery. In Fielding, inheriting Squire Allworthy's estate appears as the pledge of Tom's learned virtue and demonstrated capacity for beneficent authority.

However, both texts are dominated by the fear that this revised squirearchy will fail; the anxieties of modernity are soothed only by recourse to a patriarchalist figure dangerously proximate to tyrannical absolutism – and whose coherence in imperial modernity is highly suspect. Thus, this chapter treats the insufficiency of an historic symbol of gentlemanliness alongside the failure to fully conceive a stable, alternate possibility.

The second half of my dissertation tracks how the concerns that troubled Burke interrupted efforts to put iconic gentlemanly identities to the work of empire. Chapter Three discusses James Grainger's 1764 georgic, *The Sugar-Cane*, which follows the English squire to sea, recasting the Caribbean planter as of a type with historic modes of masculinity in a bid for cultural relevance and to establish command over an alien, hostile place. Taking up the deep imbrication of Whig ideologies of property with planter prerogative in Grainger's poem, I argue that *The Sugar-Cane* attempts to produce an almost boundless authority out of Lockean property right. The micro-focus on the colonial estate seeks to yield a British dominion that could span the globe, rendering the Caribbean gentleman as a foundational figure for a newly imperial subjectivity that Grainger works to establish. However, colonial inscrutability, metropolitan misapprehension and derision, and the inescapable horror of transatlantic slavery press the planter-as-squire conceit to its conceptual breaking point. I then analyze Samuel Foote's 1772 farce, *The Nabob*, which explores the deleterious consequences for Britain itself if one vision of corrupted power and agency were to supplant enervated forms of gentlemanliness. Foote's text, I argue, reverses Grainger's concepts of imperial authority, envisioning wealth produced in the

colony as the means for projecting power from the periphery back toward the metropole with vitiating malevolence.

Finally, Chapter Four assesses the role of the country gentleman in early nineteenth-century national tales and historical novels. I contend that Sir Walter Scott's *Rob Roy* (1817), Maria Edgeworth's *The Absentee* (1812), and Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) all deploy reformulated patriarchs in ultimately ambivalent attempts to anchor their vision of Union. In these three texts, all of which work through the place of the near-colony in the burgeoning empire, the reiterated squire is at once a stabilizing force of reconciliation and benevolent governance and a figure of tyranny and caprice who is paradoxically teetering on the verge of obsolescence. Throughout, the dissertation explores a dialectic of the residual and the emergent within masculine typologies that fail to reconcile received mythologies with unfolding imperial realities. By exploring the instabilities inherent in supposedly dominant gentlemanly typologies, and the ways that those instabilities are registered and mediated in literature, I aim to complicate received accounts of the ideological turmoil at the heart of empire in the long eighteenth century and to produce a more complete understanding of this turmoil's continued reverberations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The people who have contributed to this project over the several years in which it took shape are too numerous to list here, but I would like to use this space to thank those whose guidance and support has been absolutely indispensable. First of all, I would like to extend my gratitude to my peerless committee: James Chandler, Timothy Campbell, and Leela Gandhi. Jim has been with this project at each step of the way; indeed, a seminar paper I wrote on literary fops for his “Enlightenment Typologies” course my very first year of graduate studies led me to discover that gender (and specifically masculinity) in the long eighteenth century is an even more fraught terrain than we have realized and that I might have something to say about the implications of these instabilities. The dissertation has benefited immensely from Jim’s expert editorial eye and from the many conversations we’ve had throughout my time at the University of Chicago. Likewise, whatever argumentative, conceptual, and rhetorical merits this dissertation has owe much to Tim’s readership. There are few professors as giving of their time, energy, and attention to student work as Tim has always been, and I could invariably rest assured that he would push me to make the project as strong as it could possibly be. And, to Leela, I thank her for remaining so engaged in my success, even after leaving Chicago for Brown University. Her kind prodding and unfailingly brilliant questions have added a theoretical richness to my thinking that I hope makes this project of interest to scholars beyond my own subfield in the British eighteenth century.

I would be greatly remiss if I did not thank the amazing Heather Keenleyside for her incredibly charitable advice and her ever-present willingness to read chapter drafts. I very much think of Heather as my fourth committee member, and I have learned so much from her about scholarship, research, and teaching. Richard Rosengarten in the Divinity School has also been a

very enthusiastic additional reader, and I am indebted to him for our wonderfully productive conversations about Fielding, Defoe, and the rise of the novel. Chris Taylor has been an invaluable resource for conceiving the eighteenth-century Caribbean and the transatlantic conversations of which my dissertation hopes to be a part. Frederik Albritton Jonsson in the History Department and Jennifer Pitts in Political Science were immensely important consultants early on, when I was thinking through the form and stakes of my argument and archive. Adrienne Brown, whom I had the pleasure of working for during my final term as an undergraduate course assistant, has been a superlative resource for my understanding of the intersection of pedagogy and scholarship, and she has been an incredibly kind advocate (as I know she is for all of her students). And I have gained enormously from the many renowned professors I have either had the fortune of taking courses from here, working for as a course assistant, or simply discussing literature, methodology, and life in the campus quads and hallways: Jay Schlessner, Jane Taylor, David Bunn, Bill Brown, Martha Feldman, Christiane Frey, Victoria Kahn, Janice Knight, Clark Gilpin, Elizabeth Helsinger, Elaine Hadley, David Bevington, Bradin Cormack, Malynne Sternstein, Frances Ferguson, Julie Orlemanski, and Sonali Thakkar.

Among my graduate student colleagues at Chicago, I must first thank my long-time interlocutor, sometime running partner, and always very close friend David Diamond. He and his wife, Andrea, have been so very generous with their counsel and with their home – providing me a roof in Chicago when my personal situation meant I was commuting regularly between the Midwest and Delaware. I have accrued a debt to them that I could never hope to adequately repay (nor would they let me), but I will find a way. This year, as a preceptor in the Master of Arts Program in the Humanities, I am fortunate to work with many gifted, intelligent, and

dedicated teachers and scholars, both fellow graduate students and program administrators: Megan Tusler, Matthew Hauske, Jennifer Sichel, Nicholas Kozielek, Darrel Chia, Agnes Malinowska, Dustin Brown, Hilary Strang, Maren Robinson, Jane Bohnsack, Michael Long, Clancey D’Isa, Jeff McMahon, and Jess Hannah. Throughout my time here, I have greatly enjoyed and learned from the conversations of the Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Cultures Workshop (which I had the pleasure of co-coordinating for a year and at which I have presented work several times), and I would like to thank some of the numerous participants in that venue: Benjamin Morgan, Sam Rowe, Allison Turner, Amanda Shubert, Mary Gibbons, Aleks Prigozhin, Kristian Kerr, Kate Gaudet, David Womble, Emily Ponder, Andrew Broughton, and Michael Meeuwis. And I would like to thank other fellow graduate students whose fields are far from my own but who have taught me much over the years: Brady Smith, Chandani Patel, Stephanie Anderson, Laura Kolb, Margaret Fink, Amanda Davis, and Chalcey Wilding.

Beyond the University of Chicago, I thank Michael Gamer, my undergraduate advisor at the University of Pennsylvania and, for the last several years, my friend. Michael taught me everything about the foundations of literary criticism, and he encouraged me many years ago to make the transition from being an unhappy newspaper journalist toiling in a declining industry to reentering the academy. It was one of the best decisions of my life, and I have not looked back. Similarly, Ralph Rosen in Penn’s Classics Department gave me much excellent advice when I was preparing my graduate applications, and he was an early example of how inspiring a dedicated professor can be in undergraduate classrooms. My former colleague John Havard, now at SUNY-Binghamton, has remained an amazingly helpful reader of some of my latest work and, as always, has helped me to think more richly about the scope and nature of eighteenth-century studies. And I would like to thank the hundreds of members of the American Society for

Eighteenth-Century Studies and the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism whose work, correspondence, and discussions have helped me to become a better scholar.

Finally, I thank my caring and devoted family who continue to shape who I am. I am forever grateful to my parents, who have always encouraged me to follow my heart, and to my grandparents, who worked so hard and have given me so much. I would like to thank our cats, Beatrice and Vespasian, who have kept me company during many late-night and early-morning marathon sessions of writing and revising.

But above all, I thank my wife, Christine, for all her love, understanding, and support. She has lived with this project even more than I have, and I could not ask for a better partner in this life. This dissertation is dedicated to her.

INTRODUCTION

There is nothing in the boys we send to India worse than the boys whom we are whipping at school, or that we see trailing a pike, or bending over a desk at home. But as English youth in India drink the intoxicating draught of authority and dominion before their heads are able to bear it, and as they are full grown in fortune long before they are ripe in principle, neither nature nor reason have any opportunity to exert themselves for remedy of the excess of their premature power. – Edmund Burke, “Speech on Mr. Fox’s East India Bill,” 1 December 1783¹

Although Edmund Burke’s sharp critiques of the East India Company’s colonial administration in the 1780s generally focus on the plight of native Indians, they also exhibit increasing alarm at the deleterious effects Burke foresees the imperial project having upon the imperial metropole itself. Company rule with little-to-no parliamentary oversight, Burke argued, led to a brutal, venal, and corrupt colonial government in Bengal as young British men amassed enormous fortunes through any means available, largely unchecked by the tempering constraints of social propriety and political institution. But, as this passage in support of Charles James Fox’s proposed company reform bill of 1783 recognized, these young men would eventually come home, quite often very wealthy. For Burke, this posed a frightening paradox. Englishmen who learned how to practice tyrannous oppression abroad would now be entrusted with the

¹ Edmund Burke, “Speech on Mr. Fox’s East India Bill,” in *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, Collected in Three Volumes*, no. II (Dublin: Printed for William Porter, 1792-1793), 355.

responsibilities of the ruling elite: “They marry into your families; they enter into your senate; they ease your estates by loans...and there is scarcely an house in the kingdom that does not feel some concern and interest that makes all reform of our eastern government appear officious and disgusting....”² In the view of an Old Whig like Burke, the propertied gentleman had an almost sacred civic duty as the anchor of an ancient British constitution. Accordingly, the realities of empire and its malignant effects on the moral development of the young men who were its principle agents had deeply troubling implications for Britain itself.³

Burke’s “Speech on the East India Bill” raises a set of intimately related concerns, ideas, and thematics that are the focus of this dissertation. Specifically, I will argue that representations of imperial masculinity and an evolving concept of “manliness” served as a crucial lens through which a wide body of literature in eighteenth-century and Regency Britain explored the meaning of and anxieties attending the rise of imperialism. Furthermore, the epistemic crises of emergent imperial modernity occur alongside multiple crises in representations and understandings of identity itself, a nexus at which the issue of gender appears front and center and toward which Burke’s critique of the East Indian nabobs’ faulty moral and social development points. At the

² Ibid.

³ In her account of the rise of liberal-imperial ideology at the turn of the nineteenth-century, Jennifer Pitts views Burke’s critiques of colonialism as coalescing around an idea of a disjunction between British conceptions of political community at home and of political community (or lack thereof) in the colony. “Burke did not doubt that British principles and customs were largely just and reasonable when applied within the customary moral and political community: he believed his audience needed no great correction there. The failures of justice and humanity he discovered in India stemmed from the easy abrogation of British standards when Britons confronted people outside their own ‘municipal’ context.” Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 82. While this cogently summarizes the general structure of Burke’s writings on India and other colonies, I argue that a general fear of the pernicious effects of empire unsettling that domestic stability is present as well – a fear that places Burke in dialogue with many of the texts this dissertation will analyze. For more on Burke’s argument about empire’s effect on the colonizing nation, see Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999).

very moment when the historical bounds of political agency and sociopolitical power were being expanded by the professional opportunities afforded in the colonial space and by the influx of imperial capital into the metropole, traditional concepts of the foundations of that agency and power appeared increasingly obsolete. In place of an aristocratic patriarchy, in which the scope of the political sphere had been largely coterminous with a strongly demarcated class position and an inheritable estate, the new paradigm offered an avenue to the heart of civil and economic authority to male youths across a large spectrum of British society. But if class position at birth was no longer fully sufficient to account for an individual's political station in the growing empire (indeed, if class itself was becoming a more permeable and less absolute category), what were the new criteria that underwrote political agency?

One trait shared by these new men of empire, returning to take seats in Westminster or to purchase lavish estates in the English countryside, was, simply, that they were virtually all men.⁴ Nevertheless, I contend that implicit in critiques like Burke's attacks upon East India Company officials is often a profound skepticism (overt or subtextual) toward biological sex alone as an indicator of an imperial agent's fitness to rule abroad or at home. Political thinkers, moral philosophers, novelists, dramatists, and poets across the long eighteenth century explored versions of "manliness," a gendered concept linked with increasing adamancy to sex but that also, more importantly, signaled a state of cultivation and refinement. Or rather, the invocation

⁴ Frank O'Gorman notes how male-dominated British society remained throughout the 1700s. O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth-Century: British Political & Social History, 1688-1832* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 343. However, this does not mean that all forms of political and economic influence were closed to women. Felicity Nussbaum, for instance, offers a compelling argument that much imperial discourse and artistic production in eighteenth-century Britain was obsessed with questions of female agency and this agency's potential challenges to a masculine hierarchy. Although this dissertation will mainly discuss authorized figures of political power, such tensions are present throughout the texts I assess. Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

of masculinity in the late eighteenth century came to suggest less an absolute state than a developmental trajectory which, however requisite the appropriate biological sex was as a starting point, could not be said to be entirely innate in an individual at birth.⁵ Indeed, the idea of what English (and, later, British) manhood should consist of subtends the literary representations of a range of authors of diverse political leanings across the roughly 100-year trajectory I scrutinize. The trope of a proper form of masculinity (as well as malformed or subversive variants) is central to these authors' ideas of empire itself – whether those ideas are of redemptive struggle and economic and spiritual possibility in Defoe, of pernicious moral decay in Foote, or of the expansion of national sentiment and political community in Scott and Edgeworth.

While an exploration of the meaning of manliness (or rather, gentlemanliness – as class and gender remained so often intertwined in constructions of authority) may be a common device across a range of texts with diverse political leanings, the concept's deployment produced a complex web of implications and effects. No matter how useful the category of gender became in working through the epistemological challenges of imperial power and colonial contact, the idea of masculinity simultaneously reached backward and forward in time, allowing for the mediation and consideration of ostensibly competing ideologies and modes of behavior. We have come to think of the rise of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British Empire and its

⁵ Dror Wahrman has brilliantly explored such instabilities of identity. On the one hand, Wahrman illustrates, gender and biological sex were strongly fused together in the last decades of the eighteenth century. But, on the other hand, a large body of writers held that an appropriate education was needed to ensure that certain requisite traits of proper, gendered behavior were present in the adult male or female subject. Although I am in agreement with most of the important points of Wahrman's argument, my insistence on manliness as a function of a kind of pedagogy or *Bildung* points toward a concept more nebulous, however concretely linked to biological sex it became. Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 282-290.

production of vast amounts of finance capital as tracking the displacement of the aristocratic by the bourgeois. But as this period's emerging concepts of gender began to construct masculinity itself as a basis of agency and potentiality in an imperial modernity, ideas of manliness also always already invoked an older, premodern, pre-1688 paradigm.⁶ Thus, the male protagonist of British colonialism could stand in both as absolutist patriarch and man of feeling, entrepreneurial producer of finance capital and defender of old bloodlines, Tory and Whig, autocrat and republican.⁷ It will be a central contention of this dissertation that the conceptual mutability of masculine typologies exposed and reconciled the contradictions of imperial ideology. I will also account for the failure of key literary types to fully accomplish this reconciliation, and I will

⁶ My thesis that imperial masculinity was linked firmly to a didactic schema or a developmental trajectory suggests an affinity between this version of gendered behavior and broader, nascent liberal-imperial discourses. For instance, Caroline Reitz's reading of William Godwin and James Mill ("strange bedfellows," as Reitz acknowledges) claims that a thoroughgoing, sharply critical, and self-reflective spirit of rational inquiry united the two writers' vision for a "good" version of imperial authority. Such a concept, with its universalizing implications, is at odds with a thinker like Burke's views of empire (as Pitts and Mehta would argue), but it points to a broad focus across political leanings on specific forms of developmental programs and trajectories in determining fitness to join the structures of political power. Hence, it also suggests the state of cultivation or maturity I argue was increasingly central to literary representations of masculinity. Reitz, "Bad Cop/Good Cop," *Novel* 33.2 (Spring 2000): 175-195.

⁷ For a compelling account of the shift from seventeenth-century mercantilism, which viewed economics as a competition among largely absolutist states for control of limited resources, and the modern bourgeois order of finance capital, see Steve Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). Additionally, J. G. A. Pocock, on whose historical studies I draw substantially while occasionally departing from his conclusions, has demonstrated how the emergence of finance capital and a "monied interest" posed a serious challenge to older, aristocratic, land-based conceptions of masculine authority. Indeed, Pocock traces an early eighteenth-century criticism that the newly powerful financeers were somehow less than complete men, instead representing "an effeminate being, still wrestling with his own passions and hysterias and with interior and exterior forces let loose by his fantasies and appetites." Pocock, "Mobility of property," in *Virtue, Commerce, History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 114.

A key component of my argument is that through constructing imperial, masculine typologies, authors attempted to bridge these epistemic ruptures or to invoke ideas and traits of earlier paradigms refracted in such a way that they were adaptable to the new imperialist reality.

explore what such failures tell us about how the traumas of imperial modernity registered in colony and metropole. For the planter may be revised as a figure of benevolent, rational enlightenment, but the brutality of the world he governs also calls forth the patriarchalist despot. The squire may superficially stabilize a global society coming into being, but he must also read as a figure in collapse, while the highly local world of ancient manorialism that he evokes recedes further into history.

Immediately, my project raises two fundamental, related questions that will be at issue throughout but that demand the beginnings of an answer now as they will frame and guide my entire enquiry. The first is, why masculinity? Postcolonial studies generally and numerous recent histories of European empires have illustrated many changes and challenges to existing social and political structures that the upheavals and potentials of colonization brought with them. Additionally, the idea that the growth and rising importance of the British Empire in the eighteenth- and early-nineteenth centuries produced a fraught discursive landscape – one reflected within the literatures of the times – is an increasingly well-rehearsed narrative and one with ample support from a diverse array of excellent recent scholarship in literary criticism, political science, and global history. Jennifer Pitts, Uday Mehta, and Sankar Muthu (among others) have helped to complicate the formerly commonplace idea in postcolonial studies that the Enlightenment laid the conceptual groundwork for the liberal imperialism of the nineteenth century and its “civilizing mission.” Instead, these scholars have shown that a range of thinkers from Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson to Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Denis Diderot to Immanuel Kant and Johann Gottfried von Herder were often deeply critical of European

imperialism.⁸ Other writers like Lynn Festa and Markman Ellis have helped us to understand eighteenth-century theories of sympathy and sentiment as providing the groundwork for both early critiques of colonial oppression and justifications of the imperial mission.⁹ So why should a dissertation invested in literary representations of the meanings of empire limit itself to only one site of conceptual, epistemic disruption in this period – gender? Am I proposing masculinity as *the* hermeneutic key to a more cogent, more complete postcolonial reading of eighteenth-century British literature?

The global transformations occasioned by the rise of colonialism were massive and all-encompassing. Instead of gender and masculinity, this project could take up empire and class, or empire and race, or empire and the rise of nationalism, and so on, as indeed many excellent studies have in recent decades. Yet an evolution in the way gender is understood or represented across this project's archive touches on all these axes and helps us to explain fundamental shifts in the way identity itself was rendered in a nascent colonial modernity. Clearly, then, this dissertation builds off the work of Dror Wahrman, who has explicated the shift from a largely mutable and rather anti-individual concept of identity in the first several decades of the eighteenth century to a much more concrete, interior, and individualized conception at the dawn of the nineteenth.¹⁰ In the decades before 1780, Wahrman traces a system of understanding that held categories such as gender to be permeable, aligned more closely to self-fashioning and

⁸ Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*; Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*. Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁹ Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

¹⁰ According to Wahrman's own account of the development of his project, his research on broader identity constructions grew out of an initial focus on gender. Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self*, ix. Indeed, his book, which also discusses identity with regard to religion and race, begins with a lengthy analysis of gender and sexuality in the eighteenth century.

performance (albeit rooted in sharply socially-predetermined possibilities) than biology. But in the century's closing years, even as the uniqueness of the individual subject was an evermore dominant concept, these same categories became more rigid – rooted in the physical body, shaped by pedagogy, but increasingly unalterable by will, desire, or self-conception.¹¹

Thus, a better understanding of cultural representations of masculinity is a crucial tool for deciphering the cultural logics of empire – an interpretive lens that reoriented and reimagined eighteenth-century social and political orders, as well as individual possibilities. For the empire's new men and their new money could not fit neatly into the old class-essentialism of patriarchy and consanguinity.¹² The rise of gender in literature and culture, then, not only points toward growing limitations on self-representation and conceptualization as Wahrman describes but also registers the collapse of an older set of limitations.¹³ In exchange for a horizontally stratified order in which social role and capacity were defined by birth and bloodline, the later literary representations of the growing empire explore and present a stratification along lines of gender. It is a concept both more open (socioeconomic status at birth was starting to be viewed as escapable in the age of imperial capital) and more limiting (the ability to participate directly in

¹¹ See *ibid.*, 265-310.

¹² Donna Andrew's well-known article on the long survival of dueling in British culture suggests just how uncomfortably Whig-capitalist and Tory-aristocratic modalities inhered simultaneously within cultural practices and literary productions. In the debate over this much-romanticized, violent custom, Andrew tracks the staying power of an honor-based structure of personal identity and behavior existing well into the nineteenth century, despite multiple social and political movements to end it. In fact, Andrew writes, it was only when the practice was perceived to have slipped far enough from the aristocracy or even from wealthy commons into the ranks of the *petit bourgeoisie* that the upper classes finally abandoned it. Andrew, "The Code of Honour and Its Critics: The Opposition to Dueling in England, 1700-1850," *Social History* 5.3 (Oct., 1980): 409-434.

¹³ See Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self*, 7-44, for the basic overview of what he terms "gender's *ancien régime*."

the imperial economy was dependent upon gender categories aligned tightly with biology).

Furthermore, it marks, as I will explore, a shift attended by profound anxieties and ambivalences.

But, then, assuming that assessing the shifting terms of discourse on, and renderings of, masculinity aids us in thinking through literature's relationship to empire, the next fundamental question is, why this archive? Although an account of nascent imperial ideologies is central to my claims, and although I will turn to Enlightenment moral philosophers, historians, and political theorists at points to help assess the broader context of a given work, such sources are neither my primary materials nor are they my primary concern. This dissertation is about literary representations in the period, and it is concerned with the novel, with poetry, and with the stage. In addition, while I look at a few little-known (or at least lesser-read) authors such as James Grainger and Samuel Foote, much of the literature I discuss is highly canonical, centered on protagonists who present as – or at least eventually become – forms of an authorized, gendered ideal. Recent feminist and postcolonial critiques have gone very far in pushing against both the (now archaic) Eurocentric model of explaining and depicting the colonial encounter and in developing an awareness of sexualities and gender identities far outside the trope of the happy marriage in the country estate.¹⁴ My project returns to the canon to argue that, even within

¹⁴ The critical literature that has contributed to these massively expanded horizons in recent decades is too voluminous to recite in depth, but I shall name just a few of the texts that have shaped this work and will be in the background of my arguments below: Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub, eds., *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Michèle Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen, eds., *English Masculinities 1600-1800* (New York: Longman, 1999); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

Among the contributions specifically postcolonial or imperial-historical, Mrinalini Sinha has traced a late-nineteenth-century opposition of the stereotype of Bengali effeminacy against an ideal of British “manliness” which, although much later than my focus, is quite useful in thinking about the political implications of earlier representations of masculinity in the imperial context.

broadly accepted or hegemonic depictions of masculine behavior, the problematics of empire are visible in (and help to produce) profound complexities underlying the surfaces of such representations.

Moreover, a position implicit throughout this dissertation (a project, it should be clear by now, that is deeply committed to an historicist methodology) is that an attention to cultural forms – to fiction or self-consciously artistic production – allows us a window into these themes and transformations beyond clear-cut ideologies. I do not propose that we read any of the central texts I discuss as straightforward renderings of a particular political or strain of moral-philosophical, imperial discourse. Rather, I will argue that the works in focus position themselves at the intersection of ideology and praxis – often aligning more-or-less closely with a particular ideological position while also seeking to represent a more nuanced version of imperial reality. Confronted with a new global, economic, and political paradigm that was rapidly changing the ways in which concepts such as personal identity and political agency were envisioned, eighteenth-century authors often experimented with a range of political and philosophical concepts, many of which were in direct competition, and many of which were increasingly associated with the premodern past. But drama, poetry, and the novel also provided a space to explore the limits of imperial ideology – figures and self-imaginings that attempted to

Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1995). Ronald Hyam's *Empire and Sexuality*, although somewhat dated and at times deploying an oddly-directed polemic against a reductively portrayed "feminist" body of criticism, discusses the imperial location as providing encounters with sexual identities and otherness that was proscribed in the metropole – an intriguing challenge or corollary to the idea of identity categories becoming more essentialist in the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1990). Finally, Christopher Lane's *The Ruling Passion* offers a compelling psychoanalytic account of the intersection of narratives of global dominance, homosexual desire, and racial otherness. Lane, *The Ruling Passion: British Colonial Allegory and the Paradox of Homosexual Desire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

negotiate complexities of modernity but that were beyond the capacity of solely political discourse to explain and account for.¹⁵ Thus, in assessing the manifold complications and frictions of a range of key eighteenth-century texts, I hope to demonstrate a crucial set of authors' understanding of literature as more than a vehicle for simple reflection and mimesis. Instead, I will argue for this literature as productive of imaginative spaces beyond discourse or beyond political dialectic – spaces through which we can better understand the instabilities empire produced in the metropolitan self-image.

Beyond the broader histories and literary-critical studies of concepts of identity and imperial thought I have touched upon, this dissertation departs from two recent explorations more tightly concentrated on my central concerns, one about eighteenth-century masculinity itself and the other about political economy and representations of imperial or colonial figures. The long century's depictions of gender and gender relations have been the focus of sustained criticism and explication since the foundational feminist scholarship of the 1970s and 1980s. Erin Mackie's illuminating monograph, *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates: The Making of the Modern Gentleman in the Eighteenth Century*, is one of the important texts broadening our scope beyond canonical masculinity to discuss the century's idealized heroes and liminal (although often romanticized) literary criminals as supporting the same ideology. Mackie is certainly right to claim that eighteenth-century versions of masculinity are the basis of modern conceptions of male ideals in popular culture, and my own account also mirrors hers in tracing crucial affinities between versions of the eighteenth-century man and his Stuart-era predecessors. However, I will in addition insist on a much more chaotic set of ideas and ideologies at the heart of masculine

¹⁵ Along these lines, my thinking and methodology draw upon scholars like Raymond Williams, whose historicism owed an enormous debt to Marxist criticism but simultaneously resisted a strain in Marxist criticism that tends to reduce all literature to a matter of ideology. See, for instance, Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 211.

typologies than Mackie finds operative.¹⁶ Although a surface reading of the gentlemanly figures who orient most of the texts analyzed below suggests that they embody reassertions of premodern patriarchy, I will illustrate that competing ideologies and commitments unsettle the meaning and possibility of this mode of authority. Oppositions of finance capital and the landed estate, or of virtue and consanguinity, call into question the nature of masculine identity itself and point to deep and enduring anxieties about the consequences of imperial venture and dominion.

Along this axis, my project is also in dialogue with (and plays against) Siraj Ahmed's study of capitalism and eighteenth-century empire, *The Stillbirth of Capital: Enlightenment Writing and Colonial India*. Although masculinity itself is not of central concern to Ahmed, his account addresses imperial trade and money, the newly emerging avenues to political power that, in an era long before the franchise was extended to women and in which the Lockean concepts of property rights and ownership were central to the conception of the limits of the political community, were coextensive with an ideal, agential masculinity. Ahmed dismantles the idea that the Second British Empire was an emphatically bourgeois, capitalist endeavor. Moreover, he points out that far from resting upon Smithian laissez-faire, free-market principles and ideology, the empire of the East India Company was based instead on a radically opposed

¹⁶ While my account tracks Mackie in arguing for masculine types invoking older paradigms within a new Whig-dominated, capital-inflected order, I would also suggest that it is unclear the liminal, subversive, and criminal types Mackie discusses can be used to support a system of patriarchy. As this idea invokes a legal and political framework of heritable rank and property, consanguinity, and autocratic power, what would it mean for a criminal type like the pirate or the highwayman, figures by definition excluded from the spheres of legality and legitimacy, to embody patriarchal ideology? Insisting upon this aristocratic concept as an explanation of representations of masculinity throughout the eighteenth century obscures the eclipse of class by gender I argue is an increasingly central feature of literature after the rise of the Second British Empire. Mackie, *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates: The Making of the Modern Gentleman in the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

philosophy of militaristic expansionism, sovereign authoritarianism, and mercantilist monopoly.¹⁷ Reacting to this disjunction, much literature dealing with empire during the eighteenth century, Ahmed notes, was preoccupied with the fracture between ideology and actual circumstances.¹⁸ But it is also unclear that Ahmed's analysis troubles representations of class and colonial figures in precisely the way he presents. Regardless of the degree of proximity of the East India Company to sovereign power, it nevertheless provided a framework in which vast amounts of new money poured into Britain, challenging existing foundations of power in a way that produced deep concerns among the ruling elite.¹⁹ My dissertation contends that the proliferation of imperial types in literature reflects these fears, and that treatments of masculinity provided a site of confrontation with (and attempts at resolution of) the series of fundamental challenges the imperial project posed to ideas of agency and authority.

¹⁷ As has long been noted in postcolonial criticism, Adam Smith himself was deeply skeptical about the benefits of empire to the imperial metropole, particularly an empire administered by a mercantilist corporation. Smith's critiques are wide ranging, but his perhaps most consistently elaborated problem is the idea that colonial trade, particularly when controlled by an artificial monopoly, forces a large portion of capital that would otherwise be outlaid at home into just one channel of the colonizing country's commerce: "In her present condition, Great Britain resembles one of those unwholesome bodies in which some of the parts are overgrown, and which, upon that account, are liable to many dangerous disorders scarce incident to those in which all the parts are more properly proportioned." Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Indianapolis: The Liberty Fund, 1981), IV.vii.c.

¹⁸ In his introduction, Ahmed writes, "Eighteenth-century representations of global antiproduction offer us the opportunity to read back into the principles that have shaped our understanding of the Enlightenment, the eighteenth century's own historicophilosophical practice, which, documenting a global economy based on war and monopoly control, is even more pertinent to us now than it was then. Perhaps our critical method needs to recognize that precisely to the extent literature registers empire, it represents not the rise of capital – modernity's most intractable ideology – but rather, antithetically, its stillbirth." Ahmed, *The Stillbirth of Capital: Enlightenment Writing and Colonial India* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 21.

¹⁹ In some ways, Ahmed's monograph aligns with the work of the historian John Cannon, who argues that the "rise of the bourgeoisie" narrative in the British context is premature when attributed to the eighteenth century. Cannon, *Aristocratic Century: The Peerage of Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

Or, to frame my thesis in slightly different terms, masculine typologies became a way of deferring the anxieties of imperial modernity at its moment of origin, even as they constructed a space in which the complexities of that modernity became more visible. Thus, the West-Indian planter presents as a figure both to invoke and decry the (as recognized by increasing numbers of Britons in the latter half of the eighteenth century) horrifying fact that much imperial wealth rested upon transatlantic slavery, but also, in the georgic of James Grainger, as a figure of order and stability, taming the wilderness of the New World's tabula rasa. The mariners of Defoe and Smollett highlight the new possibilities afforded by the age of sail for self-reformation, social ascendancy, and moral education and redemption. But, much like the East India Company nabob, in worlds far away from the checking influence of polite society and social commerce, they are also without the moderating and didactic functions of British civilization. Moreover, their experiences of violence and embitterment as participants in the imperial project call into question the form and veracity of those allegedly civilizing functions. The meaning, then, of his eventual homecoming is uncertain and potentially disturbing – if such a homecoming is possible at all. Positioned against these trans-oceanic adventurers is the often-idealized figure of the squire. Resisting the upheavals of history by attempting to root sociopolitical and economic authority in the benevolent-yet-autocratic figure of the country patriarch, the country gentleman frequently serves as the traditionalist center of the ancient model of the rural estate far removed from the centers of imperial commerce and finance. Indeed, the progress of a male character toward domestic happiness in squireship is a typical teleology of many eighteenth-century novels, the large-scale rural landowner manifesting as the pinnacle of male (and, I will argue, national) development.²⁰ In the later portions of my historical trajectory, the squire himself

²⁰ Franco Moretti suggests this function of the country patriarch in his famous account of the

became an explicitly imperial figure, exporting to sites of the near colony (Ireland and the Lowland-Highland border space of post-1745 Scotland) an image of English progress and development, attempting to render colony into partner-in-union through sentimental patriarchy.²¹ However, his failure to fully suppress the traumas of historical strife undermines his own authority and suggests the limits of his sociopolitical function. In this dissertation's largest strokes, I offer a corrective to existing critical narratives of gender and empire, demonstrating that the paradoxes and problematics imperial conquest presented to eighteenth-century

Bildungsroman, a form he reads as a mechanism for dealing with the seemingly infinite turnovers and developments of modernity. "The classical *Bildungsroman* narrates how the French Revolution could have been avoided. Which culture would have been attracted to such a fantastic experiment? The instinctive response: the one that saw in the Revolution the sign of an inexorable decline. The culture of the reformist landed aristocracy – of Darcy, of Lothario – who could perceive, in the narrative mechanism of the classical *Bildungsroman*, a still predominately aristocratic universe. In exchange for a reasonable modernization – psychological (Darcy) or administrative (the 'catharsis of the feudal estate' discovered by Giuliano Biaoni in the Society of the Tower) – this class can continue to live in a symbolically compact world, respectful of 'natural' inequalities: avoiding the risks of an open and conflictual society." Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, New Edition (New York: Verso, 2000), 64. This straddling of worlds – aristocratic and bourgeois, premodern and modern – is very close to the function I see the renderings of masculinity (particularly the squire figure) as performing vis-à-vis imperial modernity.

²¹ Although his historical focus is much later (the end of the Second British Empire rather than its origins), Jed Esty's new book on the *Bildungsroman* in the colony informs my project. The English squire-as-settler representing maturity and the Irish or Scottish tenant representing perpetual childhood seems quite close to Esty's idea of "unseasonable youth." Esty, *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Additionally, the country gentlemen of my last chapter appear to be positioned as the end of typology itself that Deidre Lynch has described (and ingeniously complicated) in the production of allegedly "round" characters of Romantic fiction. Lynch's arguments that the interpretation of literary "roundness" actually stages an agon of "social relations of reading" – that a shift from an exploration of character as a matter of typology to an idea of individuation and interiority registers a shift in reactions to the evolution of market culture across the century – will further my analysis of the function the squire figure attempted to perform in novels published after the 1801 Act of Union. Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 123-163.

understandings of identity reverberate in and destabilize even the most culturally dominant representations of authority and agency.

Chapter 1: Defoe

Roughly halfway through Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), after the eponymous castaway's painful and laborious solitary education in domestic economy and husbandry have started to produce results, Crusoe surveys his dominions in the character of a sovereign: "there was my Majesty the Prince and Lord of the whole Island; I had the Lives of all my Subjects at my absolute command. I could hang, draw, give Liberty, and take it away, and no Rebels among my Subjects."²² Coming from the Puritan protagonist of a famously dissenting author, this invocation of the language of Stuart absolutism is strikingly odd. The standard critical account has viewed *Robinson Crusoe* as a rather straightforward redemption narrative by way of a Weberian, Protestant-capitalist work ethic.²³ And, on the one hand, the colony appears as an

²² Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, ed. Thomas Keymer, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, 125. References are to this edition.

²³ Indeed, most of the critics who have discussed *Robinson Crusoe* in recent decades have seemed unsure what, exactly, to do with such passages. The specter of Jacobitism and divine-right theory, then, has proved something of a lacuna in this novel, the general politics of which have been explicated at great length. Ian Watt and Maximillian E. Novak laid the groundwork for a reading of *Crusoe* as an exploration of *homo economicus*. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe Richardson, and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962); Novak, *Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962). More recently, postcolonial criticism has homed in on the text's engagement with questions of otherness and its complex treatment of indigenous peoples and transatlantic slavery. See, for instance, Srinivas Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency, 1688-1804* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 71-77. Nevertheless, few have touched upon the strain of royalist thought that surfaces repeatedly in Defoe's narrative, or they have treated it as irony or sarcasm meant to underscore Crusoe's profound isolation. The latter, for instance, is the gloss Thomas Keymer and James Kelly give to the text's play with Jacobitism in the notes to their 2007 Oxford University Press edition of *Robinson Crusoe*. Keymer and Kelly, explanatory notes to *Robinson Crusoe*, by Daniel Defoe, ed. Thomas Keymer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). 288.

intriguing site for socioeconomic ascendancy and self-reformation, as well as the ideal venue for the moral education of the young English man, the toil the space requires taming his ungoverned impulses into productive, Protestant-republican habits and practice.

Yet, on the other hand, Crusoe's flirtations with absolutist logic outside the confines and moral restraints of European society raise troubling questions about the potentialities of the colonial space. Without a social body to check his assertions of power and authority, Defoe raises the idea of an inherent drive toward monarchy and aristocratic patriarchy at the state-of-nature moment itself – a vision of the foundational moment of a society that aligns much more with Hobbesist thought or with Sir Robert Filmer's divine-right theory than with a Lockean social contract.²⁴ Burke, some 60 years after Defoe, would fear the absence of English society in the foreign world of the colony enabling a despotic tendency in the young men of the East India Company. However, *Robinson Crusoe* here outlines a vision potentially even more troubling – a vision not of a perverse or misshapen moral education in the colony yielding an alien despotism, but of a drive toward European despotic patriarchy always on the cusp of reemerging in the Englishman himself. Thus, the figure of Robinson Crusoe on his island helps to stage a series of problematics that will haunt the later texts I discuss and their explorations of masculinity in the imperial context. Seeming to speak the language of commerce, the colonial merchant or settler is in perennial danger of slipping instead into the guise of the old absolutist – a figure who, in the

²⁴ The dates of Crusoe's isolation become especially suggestive in the reading I propose. Shipwrecked in September 1659, Crusoe loses all contact with European civilization during the final years of the English Commonwealth. He returns home in 1687, in the final days of restored Stuart rule. Although we should resist pushing allegorical implications too far beyond the evidence Defoe explicitly gives us, it is nonetheless tempting to read an allusion in this Puritan protagonist's musings on, and imaginative longings for, a kind of absolutism toward the collapse of the Puritan Commonwealth (which, under Cromwell, had of course turned to despotism early on).

Whig and dissenting imagination, was banished from British society with the deposition of James II in 1688.²⁵

My first chapter will insist that we take these passages more seriously than most critics have been inclined to and read them as part of Defoe's commentary on the nature of masculine power and political agency in the colonial space. I will show that Defoe's concerns over the precise teleologies of individual development that would arise in the imperial context represent an early moment in a line of conversation that would be repeated with increasing alarm as the century advanced and as Britain's imperial dominions became ever larger – and Britain's subject peoples evermore politically, racially, and culturally diverse. A Puritan colonist, whose origins are in a family of tradesmen and who is without even his self-made fortune after the shipwreck, envisioning himself as an aristocratic patriarch or royal despot points toward the insufficiency of old class boundaries to fully account for imperial modernity even in the earliest years of Georgian Britain. But the despotic implications of his claims to authority, and the ease with which an old-model patriarchalism takes root in his imagination and in the political community that develops on his island, constitutes a critique of both empire and European manhood.

Chapter 2: Smollett and Fielding

My second chapter will move (at least in parts) from the colony to the British countryside in order to assess the squire, one of the most pervasive of the typologies I trace. I will argue that the landed country gentleman – a character who often occupied the moral center of the

²⁵ Manuel Schonhorn has taken the ideology of absolutism in *Robinson Crusoe* more seriously than many other critics, arguing that it presents a critique of Whiggism in practice versus Whiggism in theory. I depart from Schonhorn by arguing that, rather, it aims at the anxieties attending colonialism, not finance capital and Whiggism more broadly. Schonhorn, *Defoe's Politics: Parliament, Power, Kingship, and Robinson Crusoe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 161-162.

eighteenth-century novel and was frequently idealized as the image of mature masculine identity – also helped reify the British self-imagining of advanced national development. This was, of course, an idea that would form the basis of somewhat later liberal-imperial ideology that insisted on differentials of civilizational progress as the grounds for British domination of subject foreign cultures.²⁶ The brutality inherent in this expansive dominion, not only in the colony but also in the metropole, appears as a deeply uncomfortable juxtaposition to these ideas and, in turn, destabilizes the signification of the benevolent patriarch – a theme with which Tobias Smollett’s *Roderick Random* (1748) is concerned throughout. But Smollett’s novel is also unable to abandon a fixation on squireship as the apotheosis of gentlemanliness, and I place Smollett in dialogue with Henry Fielding’s magnum opus, *Tom Jones* (1749) to explore both the sociopolitical capacities and the problematics posed by this highly familiar type.

In the 1740s, the squire – or rather, a specific kind of squire – was already being used to signal a kind of settlement and to bolster Whig hegemony, which will inform my account of these novels. Fielding’s Squire Allworthy is beloved of his tenants and servants and a model of civic virtue in the countryside. Meanwhile, his Tory counterpart Squire Western is a rabidly classist drunk who registers as politically neutered both in his adherence to Jacobitism at the moment of its ultimate defeat and in his general concern for little besides the hunt and the bottle. In the comparison between these two characters, we can trace an account of what an enlightened country gentleman should look like. A large landowner with the accompanying responsibilities of the vote (or standing for Parliament), some judicial powers, and the management of the Whig ideal base unit of the country estate, Allworthy anchors a Lockean/Harringtonian concept of a political community. He bridges the realm of national (and thus, increasingly, imperial) politics

²⁶ See, for instance, Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*, and Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*.

and the localized world of rural life.²⁷ In other words, Allworthy and Western represent visions of authorized and failed forms of masculine authority in Hanoverian Britain. But the novel's resolution also problematizes the sources of masculine authority, which, in Whig ideology, lie somewhere between property right and, still, bloodline (albeit it usually conceived more as heritability via legal framework than consanguinity authorizing legality itself).²⁸

The influx of imperial wealth only further problematizes this dichotomy at the heart of masculine agency, and the bulk of this chapter takes up *Roderick Random* to place the colonial valence more explicitly in view. Like Tom Jones, Rory Random is a figure who is unable to claim familial connections, in this case due to a falling out between his father and grandfather. Random must instead fend for himself as he attempts to recoup the status that should be his according to bloodline, a challenge complicated not only by his poverty but also, as a Scot, his otherness in eighteenth-century London. As Rory's picaresque education unfolds, his father (as we learn at the end of the novel) is amassing a vast fortune in Spanish America. When father and son are reunited, they return home to lairdship, repurchasing their deeply encumbered paternal estate from the relations who have squandered the family fortune. Colonial wealth

²⁷ A form of republicanism which, as John Richetti notes, retains (and speaks through) the language of older, absolutist ideologies. "But this new order... was a tricky balancing act in which the ruling class retained its hegemony by the theological-aristocratic ideology of the *ancien regime*. Fielding's new novel is quite specifically the literary articulation of a similar balance of ideology and administrative faculty." Richetti, "The Old Order and the New Novel of the Mid-Eighteenth Century: Narrative Authority in Fielding and Smollett," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 2.3 (1990): 188.

²⁸ Tom's designation as Allworthy's heir at the novel's end – an elevation from bastard foundling to powerful member of the gentry – raises a potential for social mobility that pushes against the aristocratic component of Whig, country ideology. At the same time, this designation is only completed when Tom is recognized as Allworthy's nephew, the illegitimate son of Allworthy's sister whom Allworthy then legitimates via adoption. It is a moment that will be repeated in numerous eighteenth-century novels that go to great lengths to propose ideas of virtue and (later) sensibility, rather than family and pedigree, as the key markers of characterological worth, but which then fall back on a discovery of consanguinity.

becomes the vehicle for great social mobility, but, more importantly in Smollett's narrative, it also becomes a means for correcting an improper delegitimation – restoring the Randoms to their rightful place in Scottish society, a place perhaps supported by bloodline but one that the novel forces Random to earn through a long period of psychological and physical challenges and tests.²⁹ However, Smollett's novel is deeply ambivalent as to its own resolution and the meaning of events that brought this revolution about. Having critiqued the cruelty and arbitrariness of premodern patriarchy via Rory's father's disinheritance, *Roderick Random* ends with its eponymous hero restored to the same patriarchal social position. While learned virtue and moderation are the superficial meanings of Rory's wanderings, the violence of imperial society and the duplicity of its conventions suggest that Rory has instead been tutored in performativity without content. The novel is thus pulled between a celebration of empire's new avenues to authority and agency and substantial anxieties as to the implications of these possibilities.

Chapter 3: Grainger and Foote

Turning away from the novel in my third chapter, I will treat two figures of the colonial encounter, the West-Indian planter and the East India Company nabob, whose troubling implications – both at home and as agents of empire in the colony itself – are clearer on the surface than in the case of the squire. The texts I will explore – Samuel Foote's comedy, *The Nabob* (1771), and James Grainger's West-Indian georgic, *The Sugar-Cane* (1764) – are a seemingly odd pairing, in geographical location as well as in thematics and form. Foote's play

²⁹ Although, reminding us of the relative position of Scotland in the Union, Lynch leads us to question the full meaning of this reclaimed status. He may be a gentleman again, but he is also Scottish, and, as his humiliations in London early in the novel illustrate, his nationality proves a potentially insurmountable barrier in both Rory's self-conception and his capacity for agency within the broader British context. Lynch, *The Economy of Character*, 102-112.

concerns an East India Company man returning home as a figure of avarice, lust, and cruelty, and it gestures toward a Burkean fear of the homecoming of a corrupted, colonial masculine pedagogy. Meanwhile, Grainger's four-book poem seems torn in its attempts to elevate the cultural/civilizational status of the Caribbean sugar planter – to present this figure as a virtuous colonial analogue to the benevolent squire while simultaneously registering the horrific practices of the New World plantation. In two very different modes centered on very different imperial locations, this chapter will assess divergent treatments of recurring and similar problematics.³⁰

Alive to the nascent abolitionist discourse that would soon find a growing voice in the writings of John Wesley, Olaudah Equiano, Thomas Clarkson, Granville Sharp, and William Wilberforce, Grainger's georgic acknowledges the severe moral implications of transatlantic slavery. But he attempts throughout to justify the colonial gentleman's rule through an expansive view of property right. Arguing that Africa is an unhealthy and dangerous continent and that therefore enslaved Africans are better off under the paternalistic rule of Europeans, Grainger attempts to instill the planter with the knowledge and technical fluency that will support

³⁰ In the case of *The Sugar-Cane*, Grainger's choice of form itself deepens the complications of the imperial reality he explores. Kevis Goodman, for one, has argued that the revival of the classical georgic form in the eighteenth-century attempted to assuage the troubling implications of modernity and its diverse epistemological crises through its locational hyper-specificity. But in so doing, Goodman claims, georgic proved uniquely able (whether intentionally or subtextually) to render those very crises more visible. Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1-16. At the same time, Foote's usage of the theater to explore the East Indian nabob's return to the metropole brings its own formal complexities. Deploying the stage – a medium that numerous eighteenth-century writers linked to market culture and the financial exchange's troubling implications for the stability of identity itself – to treat a young man's becoming alien in an alien space beyond the purview of polite, English society, suggests that we remain attuned to form itself in thinking through how masculine development and self-formation is being problematized in the colony. See, for instance, Jean-Christophe Agnew, *World's Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

his claims of dominion.³¹ Indeed, in transposing the georgic to the West Indies, Grainger cultivates the idea of the planter as the virtuous tamer of natural disorder, and thus aligns him with the benevolent squire central to Whig self-conceptions of ideal British manhood in the domestic sphere.³² Thus, Grainger uses the sugar planter as a way of acknowledging a particularly horrific reality of the burgeoning empire, but he then attempts to soften or diffuse this knowledge through the invocation of virtuous masculine control and command. That this attempt proves beyond that capacity of the poetic power he invokes suggests the conceptual limits of his imaginative ideal, a failure that will surface in multiple literary representations of imperial masculinity going forward.

Footo's nabob serves no such ameliorative purpose. Instead, he stands in for the potentially destructive effect of colonial capital on the moral and social order of late eighteenth-century England. The central plot of Footo's play focuses less on the brutalities of company rule in Bengal than do Burke's voluminous speeches on Warren Hastings' administration (Burke's

³¹ For instance, in Book IV, Grainger writes,

Oh, did the tender muse possess the power,
Which monarchs have, and monarchs oft abuse;
'Twould be the fond ambition of her soul,
To quell the tyrannic sway; knock off the chains
Of heart-debasing slavery. (Grainger, *The Sugar-Cane: A Poem*, in *The Poetics of Empire: A Study of James Grainger's The Sugar-Cane*, ed. John Gilmore (New Brunswick: The Athlone Press, 2000) IV.232-236.)

But he then goes on to speak of Africa's oppressive climate and diseases – ills which European science can supposedly address to the advantage of Africans who have been kidnapped and transported across the Atlantic as slaves.

³² Although Grainger's version of the planter may have even greater affinities with a conservative strain of the Scottish Enlightenment which viewed the squire figures or, in Scotland, lairds as vital to subduing and civilizing liminal or othered spaces like the Scottish Highlands. Fredrik Albritton Jonsson treats these concepts at length in his recent monograph. Jonsson, *Enlightenment's Frontiers: The Scottish Highlands and the Origins of Environmentalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

accounts of atrocities committed under Hastings during the latter's impeachment are famous), though corruption and thievery amongst company agents are frequently alluded to. But, like Burke, one of *The Nabob's* greatest fears is the importation of despotic greed into the metropole when a corrupted company servant returns home (in this case, Sir Matthew Mite, who seeks to force the deeply indebted Oldhams into allowing him to marry their daughter).³³ Embodying avarice, arrogance, and brutality, Foote's nabob also registers an emerging formula of masculine authority built upon the wealth generated via participation in empire. That the Oldhams, standing in for a more traditional version of political and social authority, have become so indebted that their own claim to agency and power is, for a time, subservient to Mite's suggests that the classic, aristocratic mode of masculine identity is no longer workable (at least not wholly). Foote's nabob, then, incorporates both a critique of the rearticulation of masculine strength as possession of capital and a critique of the older social structures that appear powerless to stem the changes driven by imperial finance.³⁴

³³ Indeed, Ahmed argues that the main target of Foote's satire is not the nabobs themselves but a British mercantile culture that is so pervious to the return of these vice-ridden figures. "For this play, in contrast to the print campaign against the Company servants, the significance of the nabob lies not in any new threat he poses but rather in the ease with which he enters the British state and economy, thereby revealing the indistinction between European progress and 'Asiatic despotism'" (Ahmed, *The Stillbirth of Capital*, 96).

³⁴ Conversely, *The School for Scandal* (1777) by Richard Brinsley Sheridan (who, interestingly, would go on to join Burke in the prosecution of the Hastings impeachment) seems to take a much more optimistic view of imperial capital. In this slightly later play, the nabob figure, Sir Oliver Surface, comes home to London to recognize and reward inherent virtue (represented in his nephew, Charles Surface, who believes in charity and familial honor, though his gambling and carousing have sunk him in debt) and punish inherent evil (represented in his other nephew, Joseph Surface, who mimics virtue only to seek his wealthy colonial uncle's fortune). However, I would contend that, in contrast to *The Nabob*, India itself is comparatively farther out of view in Sheridan's play despite being the source of Sir Oliver's wealth. Thus, a commentary on empire, if Sheridan intended one, is much more obscure. See Sheridan, *The School for Scandal*, in *The School for Scandal and Other Plays*, ed. Michael Corder (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Chapter 4: Owenson, Edgeworth, and Scott

The final chapter will return to the metropole, or rather, to the nearby colonial sites of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Scotland and Ireland. Occupying a conceptual space closer to a partner in an emerging union than a colonial holding (at least in the representations of English, Scottish, and Irish advocates of a united crown and parliament), the proximity of these neighboring imperial locations seems to have opened the possibility of colonization by way of an English-modeled squirearchy, blending localized sentimental ties with national civic participation.³⁵ For a range of novelists, from Sydney Owenson (Lady Morgan), whose personal politics at some points became quite republican, to Walter Scott, an enthusiastic proponent of union and the sense of “Britishness,” to Maria Edgeworth, who supported Anglo-Irish rule while remaining deeply critical of the treatment of Irish Catholics and peasants, the concept of the benevolent squire offered a strongly appealing figure for bridging cultural difference and assuaging the traumas of the three nations’ historical strife.³⁶ This chapter will explore the idea of the English squire as a figure of empire in a trio of novels appearing within a decade of one

³⁵ Yet, as Robert Travers makes clear, a strong line of Whig critique of the East India Company in the 1770s and 1780s was that the company, in disrupting the local land administration of the *zamindari* (Mughul officials whom critics of Hastings viewed as akin to English squires) had drastically interfered with Indian property right and undermined the basis of an ancient constitution. See Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India: The British in Bengal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

³⁶ For an account of the rural estate as a model for the Irish nation in Edgeworth, see Sara L. Maurer, *The Dispossessed State: Narratives of Ownership in Nineteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 19-54. A central idea of Maurer’s argument is that, in Edgeworth, the long history of competing claims of the colonizing English and native Irish to the same properties (whether in law, in affective ties, or in cultural memory) makes the entire concept of ownership highly nebulous. This very ambiguity serves to enable the sort of transcultural détente Edgeworth, in her novels, seems to long for while simultaneously troubling the exact nature of the political authority the country patriarch is able to claim. These same challenges and possibilities, I will argue, are also apparent in Morgan’s and Scott’s colonizing squires.

another: Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806); Edgeworth's *The Absentee* (1812); and Scott's *Rob Roy* (1817).³⁷

All three novels merge the concept of sentimental masculinity with the autocratic patriarchy implied by "squirearchy" in their conceptualizations of the role of masculine authority in the process of union-building. Morgan's Horatio M. (a dissolute, almost rakish young man when he is sent to his father's absentee estate in Ireland as punishment for his misdeeds) has an instinctive prejudice against the native Irish. He is brought to amend his misconception through his engagement with a highly romanticized Irish landscape and through his desire for the princess Glorvina, daughter of an ancient Irish royal house that his family dispossessed in the seventeenth-century invasions of Cromwell. In the end, the power of these sentimental engagements binds Horatio to his (eventual, upon inheritance) patriarchal obligations to his Irish tenantry and collapses the impasse of cultural otherness. Although Edgeworth's Lord Colambre also has a love interest (in the character of Grace Nugent) to help kindle his affection for his Irish home, the romance plot appears to drive his development to a much lower degree. Instead, it is the contrast between the dutiful devotion of his family's tenants and the contempt with which his Anglo-Irish parents are treated by English high society that fuels his desire to return home, an expedition that completes his transformation from a state of promising but incomplete youth into a figure of masculine authority. Meanwhile, Scott's Francis Osbaldistone is deeply dissatisfied

³⁷ I should note that I am using the term "squire," which generally referred to members of the upper gentry, a bit more broadly than its historical meaning connoted. For instance, Morgan's Horatio M. and Edgeworth's Lord Colambre, are both members of the nobility. My rationale for including peers (or prospective peers) under the penumbra of "squire" is two-fold: firstly, the bourgeoisification of the peerage in the eighteenth century meant the distance between the relative social function of nobility and gentry was diminished; secondly, there appears to be little difference in the civic and social function performed by the noblemen I discuss here and their untitled counterparts. All three (Horatio M., Edward Waverley, and Lord Colambre) orient and stabilize the domestic sphere of a large country estate. Their different positions at court or at Westminster do not figure into these narratives.

with modern trajectories of gentlemanly development (represented by his father's City financial house) and is drawn by ennui and his lust for the beautiful Jacobite, Diana Vernon, to his Tory uncle's Northumberland Manor. His travels lead him to a new love for Scotland (just across the Tweed), and to the repossession of the country seat his own father abandoned for the spheres of imperial commerce.

Yet the invocation of a type of patriarchal Englishness evangelizing progress and union in the near-colonial space meets a series of challenges in all three of these writers that threaten to collapse the (by this point "Old Whig") vision of both imperial masculinity and unionist ideology. As Kathryn Kirkpatrick notes, *The Wild Irish Girl* has long been criticized for over-romanticizing a sense of "Irishness" of a brand that fueled the fires of nationalist-unionist strife in the twentieth century.³⁸ I contend this is actually a vital component of Owenson's critique. For the capacity of the male hero's sentimental engagement fails at times, notably in his inability to reconcile the Scottish-Presbyterian colony of Ulster into his vision of transnational amity. *The Wild Irish Girl* thus leaves a large swath of the Irish population beyond the pale of its resolution at the level of the country estate. Edgeworth's lords Colambre and Clonbrony may recognize their obligation to their tenantry, who suffer under the oppression of absenteeism, but this resolution leaves unresolved the Anglo-Irish landowners' own position in the Union of which they serve as colonial agents. Treated with barely-concealed contempt in London, they return to Ireland as beloved patriarchs – within a system whose national center is no longer Dublin but London. Embodiments of empire, the two peers are relegated to a subordinate status within the social order of union, leaving the nature of their own identity in flux and, by extension, that of

³⁸ Kirkpatrick, introduction to *The Wild Irish Girl*, by Lady Morgan (Sydney Owenson), ed. Kathryn Kirkpatrick (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), xiii-xiv.

the entire Irish sociopolitical order.³⁹ *Rob Roy*, meanwhile, appears caught between modalities of authority, drawn to a patriarchalist country manor that feels acutely archaic (and bordering on obsolescence). Nor do its alternative visions of masculine agency appear much more coherent. Frank's forays into the Scottish highlands introduce him to the famous brigand, Rob Roy himself, a clansman who at first appears much more successful in resisting modern possibilities of identity. Nonetheless, the novel is aware the masculine typology Rob represents is verging upon collapse. In many ways, the novel is haunted by the specter of the Highland Clearances, the final destruction of the Highland clan system continuing to unfold as Scott wrote.⁴⁰ Throughout these narratives, the sufficiency of the squirarchical patriarch, still rooted in a dialectic of Whig, bourgeois, and aristocratic ideology as an anchor of the imperial political system, is coming into question.

³⁹ Not to mention the fact that Edgeworth, both within this novel and, famously, in her earlier *Castle Rackrent*, sharply unsettled the idea that the Anglo-Irish elite were ever beloved of their Catholic tenants.

⁴⁰ For an account of the clearances and their social disruptions, see John Prebble, *The Highland Clearances* (New York: Penguin Books, 1969).

CHAPTER 1

A DISSENTER'S ABSOLUTIST FANTASIES: THE STRANGE, SURPRISING POLITICS OF *ROBINSON CRUSOE*

Nature has left this Tincture in the Blood,
That all Men would be Tyrants if they cou'd:
If they forbear their Neighbours to devour,
'Tis not for want of Will, but want of Power....

— Defoe, *Jure Divino: A Satyr*¹

at length he came close to me, and then he kneel'd down again, kiss'd the Ground,
and laid his Head upon the Ground, and taking me by the Foot, set my Foot upon
his Head; this it seems was in token of swearing to be my Slave for ever; I took
him up, and made much of him, and encourag'd him all I could.

— Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*²

The scene of Friday's abject submission in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) – a narrative that has been endlessly reworked, retold, dissected, and explicated for almost three centuries – has received perhaps more sustained critical attention than any other single moment in this novel. And for good reason. Laden as it is with the symbolism of colonial domination, racial otherness, and West Indian slavery, the image of Friday placing his head underneath Crusoe's foot is a key moment at which the novel's treatment of imperial politics assumes center stage. The problematics of colonialism and the text's intersection with imperialist ideology

¹ Daniel Defoe, *Jure Divino: A Satyr. In Twelve Books. By the Author of The True-Born-Englishman* (London, 1706), i.

² Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 172.

appear quite early in the novel; after all, Crusoe runs away from home to embark on a life as a sea-faring merchant, winds up as a successful, slave-owning planter in Brazil, and is shipwrecked on his Caribbean island during an ill-fated slaving expedition to West Africa. Yet for the bulk of the narrative before the encounter with Friday, Crusoe's New World island has presented as a *tabula rasa*. Devoid of any other inhabitants, the island has served as Crusoe's psychological and spiritual blank slate, a space for reflection and introspection in which Defoe's protagonist can contemplate the nature of Providence, the meaning of his "original sin," and can undertake the physical and emotional work of his own religious transformation.³ Crusoe's understanding of the meaning of this space and his own place within it receives a serious shock midway through the novel when he discovers the solitary footprint – evidence that his unpeopled island is actually visited by cannibalistic Carib tribes with unknown frequency. While this discovery occasions a kind of ontological crisis (Crusoe briefly considers tearing down all of his structures and improvements, the physical markers of his religious toil and progress), it is in the encounter with Friday that Crusoe's status and potential – and his symbolic meaning as an agent of empire – erupt into full view.⁴ No longer a lone castaway hundreds or thousands of miles

³ Although several decades of eighteenth-century criticism have since helped revise and reshape our understanding of Defoe's aims in *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, J. Paul Hunter's groundbreaking study of the mid-1960s remains massively influential and one of the best accounts of *Robinson Crusoe's* engagement with Puritanism and the spiritual biography tradition. Hunter, *Reluctant Pilgrim* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966).

⁴ For Crusoe's initial reaction to the footprint, see *RC* 135. Although this chapter focuses mainly on *Crusoe's* political themes and less so its religious or spiritual ones, Hunter argues that Crusoe's discovery of the Caribs' proximity and his meeting with Friday is crucial to producing the text's religious meaning as well: "Crusoe at last returns this relapse into his greatest spiritual triumph, as the footprint materializes into creatures who intrude upon his philosophy and force him to expand his Christianity from an individual level to a social one" (Hunter, *Reluctant Pilgrim*, 182). But, read alongside the political structures I argue Defoe traces in *Robinson Crusoe*, my own account holds this development of a "social" religious understanding to be a much more foreboding, less clear development than Hunter reads it as representing.

from the nearest European outpost, Crusoe is transformed into the white colonizer whose dominion is not only the Americas' land but their newly subject peoples as well.

Friday's absolute submission to Crusoe – his European savior, protector, and master – actually solidifies a status Crusoe has claimed for himself since his first years on the island. After Crusoe has completed his initial fortifications, and his early experiments in agriculture have begun to bear fruit, Crusoe styles himself as the island's absolute sovereign, an assertion that will be repeated throughout the novel:

I descended a little on the Side of that delicious Vale, surveying it with a secret Kind of Pleasure, (tho' mixt with my other afflicting Thoughts) to think that this was all my own, that I was King and Lord of all this Country indefeasibly, and had a Right of Possession; and if I could convey it, I might have it in Inheritance, as compleatly as any Lord of a Manor in England. (RC 85)

Such claims have caused a good deal of consternation amongst Defoe scholars, invoking, as they do, a widely divergent set of modern and premodern discourses. In one (rather lengthy) sentence, Crusoe appears by turns as an absolute monarch with his “indefeasible” claim to power, a country squire, and a Lockean defender of property rights.⁵ Many critics from Marx

⁵ Michael McKeon reads these competing symbolisms and statuses as Defoe staging (perhaps intentionally and subconsciously at more or less the same time) the upheavals of a process of secularization in early eighteenth-century Britain: “If this fantasy of proprietorship appeals primarily to the impulse toward private ownership and capitalist improvement, there is at least an element here also of contemplative pastoralism and the domestic themes of Horatian retirement. Another way of saying this is that Defoe's island utopia is able to incorporate notions of value that are associated not only with capitalist and laboring industry but also with aristocratic ideology and its location of value in land. Of course, this syncretism can be found in the assimilationist posture of progressive ideology itself.” McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 326. McKeon's account of the novel's historical and political tensions is persuasive and, I think, largely accurate. However, I argue below that the emphatically royalist ideology Crusoe often indulges represents less the pull of an older patriarchalist ideology and paradigm occurring alongside a commitment

onward have viewed *Robinson Crusoe* as a text intimately engaged with the rise of capital – a celebration of what Max Weber in the early twentieth century would term “the Protestant ethic.” Thus, this invocation of the ideologies of the Stuart court or country-party Tories has seemed strikingly odd.

Indeed, in their 2007 Oxford edition of *Robinson Crusoe*, Thomas Keymer and James Kelly gloss Crusoe’s monarchical pronouncements as “burlesque” send-ups of Stuart absolutism, the absurdity of a man profoundly alone, aside from an assortment of goats, cats, and a parrot, claiming to be a king becoming a pointed satire aimed at the banished royal house and its partisans.⁶ But if this moment is a joke, it is one often repeated in the novel with growing specificity. A bit later, when Crusoe reasserts his kingly title, he also enumerates the awesome powers associated with his sovereignty in the starkest of Hobbesian terms, although his political community at this point consists of only himself and various animals: “there was my Majesty the Prince and Lord of the whole Island; I had the Lives of all my Subjects at my absolute Command. I could hang, draw, give Liberty, and take it away, and no Rebels among all my subjects” (*RC* 125). As Crusoe remains alone on his island at this moment, these lines can read as evermore-outlandish fantasy. However, given that the first *human* subject of Crusoe’s dominion submits himself as “my Slave for ever,” can we take this as simply an extended joke at the expense of the Stuart court or its exiled Jacobite line by the novel’s end?

This chapter argues that Defoe’s exploration of divine-right sovereignty in the colony is more than just absurd humor, representing instead a seductive, newfound potential for power and claim to command in the colonial space. Yet alongside this potential is an unsettling fear – at

to the rising order of capital than the potential reawakening in the colonial space of an ideology Defoe would very much like to consign to the pre-1688 past.

⁶ Keymer and Kelly, explanatory notes to *Robinson Crusoe*, 288.

times latent yet often overt – of where that power, discovered far beyond the scope and moderating influence of European society, would lead. Even more important, though, is the reassertion of patriarchalism, that defense of royal absolutism put forward by Cavalier theorists in the Civil War years which sought to found the king’s sovereign authority upon a concept of Charles I as his realm’s first father. It was a schema by which successive monarchs endlessly resurrected and embodied the social and political position of Adam, and thus it was a schema by which the sovereign is grounded by the paternal. Throughout *Robinson Crusoe*, childhood and fatherhood (whether biological, adoptive, or symbolic) are repeatedly deployed as indexes for obedience and authority. It is, after all, Crusoe’s refusal to follow his own father’s advice that Crusoe interprets as the first cause of his many trials. And it is Friday’s acknowledgement of Crusoe in the role of a father – in addition to but at points superseding his role as a master – which serves both to cement Friday’s subservient position in his colonizer’s political structure and to provide a kind of affective sign of his loyalty: “his very Affections were ty’d to me, like those of a Child to a Father; and I dare say, he would have sacrific’d his Life for the saving mine, upon any occasion whatsoever...” (*RC* 176).⁷ A central claim of this dissertation is that as the unfolding imperial project presented Britain with manifold epistemic, ethical, and economic upheavals and challenges, an increasingly gendered ideal of masculinity – at once forward-looking and residual or reactionary – was advanced by a multitude of writers as the force that could bring this project to its glorious conclusion.⁸ In Defoe’s novel, the masculine centers upon

⁷ The appearance of Friday’s actual father on the island underscores Crusoe’s successful usurpation of that position. Although Crusoe is impressed with the great tenderness and respect Friday shows for his biological parent, Friday does not return with “the old *Savage* the Father of *Friday*” to the mainland, remaining on the island with his new, European father. See *RC* 209.

⁸ This conclusion was perceived, of course, as the British Empire’s indefinite continuation, maintenance, and expansion, not only by the mercantilists and capitalists who relied on the empire’s newly created avenues (or, rather, sea lanes) of wealth for their ongoing financial gain,

its most primitive and its most absolute claims to agency, deploying an ideology that locates its origins in Genesis and that had, in early Georgian Britain's not-too-distant past, been used to support the Stuart partisans' most sweeping claims for kingly power – claims that were anathema to any good, dissenting Whig.

As twenty-first-century readers, we encounter seventeenth-century political theory and the great debate between the absolutists and the contractualists in the wake of the foundational feminist criticism of the 1970s and 1980s. Thus, the gendered aspects of patriarchalism can seem obvious to us. This has not always been the case.⁹ For a very long time, scholarship on Civil War, Restoration, and early Whig thought focused on accounting for what is often termed “the rise of liberalism,” explicating the development of a general concept of rights and limitations on governmental power without much exploration of who was excluded from those newly coalescing political communities.¹⁰ In the preface to his 1991 Cambridge edition of the

but also according to the “liberal” strain of imperialism that would begin to emerge toward the end of the eighteenth century. Uday Singh Mehta, for one, has argued that, despite the progressive ideology of liberal imperialism, its conceptual underpinnings seek to allow for the perpetual deferral of its telos, since the dichotomy it presents of an advanced Europe and a primitive Africa, America, or Asia means that the colonizer can always be represented in imperial ideology as outpacing the colonized. Mehta, *Liberal Imperialism and Empire*, 29-30.

⁹ John M. Wallace's 1968 account of the Civil War debates, for instance, barely mentions the symbolic invocation of Adam in patriarchalist discourse and makes no mention at all of the place of women within its episteme. Wallace, *Destiny His Choice: The Loyalty of Andrew Marvell* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 9-68.

¹⁰ Part of the lack of interest in the gendered claims of patriarchalism might be attributable to simply taking the hegemony patriarchal systems asserted at face value. For instance, Melissa Butler's essay “Early Liberal Roots of Feminism: John Locke and the Attack on Patriarchy,” while groundbreaking in its attempt to bring a discourse of gender into our thinking about early liberalism, nonetheless establishes a very sharp binary between a patriarchal, pre-Locke world in which agency is fundamentally defined by biological sex and a post-Locke world in which such restrictions begin to collapse. Butler, “Early Liberal Roots of Feminism: John Locke and the Attack on Patriarchy,” *The American Political Science Review* 72.1 (March 1978): 135-150. More recent studies have gone a long way towards investigating the limitations of a strictly progressive reading of Locke. See, for instance, Kirstie M. McClure, *Judging Rights: Lockean Politics and the Limits of Consent* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

works of Sir Robert Filmer – that extreme proponent of patriarchy and royalist thought whom I argue is very much present in *Robinson Crusoe* – Johann P. Sommerville cites the emergence of gender studies and women’s studies as the compelling reason for bringing out the first edition of Filmer in more than four decades.¹¹ Nevertheless, being male and being a father are not synonymous concepts, and the patriarchalist political ideology of the Stuart and Commonwealth eras emphasized allegory and social position as much as or more than it did sex. Masculinity and patriarchy are concepts that closely track one another but without always fully overlapping.

This conceptual tension and potential slippage lies at the center of the problems and thematics in the eighteenth-century, British-imperial literature that my project addresses. As recent historical studies have shown, gender as defined by biological sex becomes a more absolute and less fluid concept as the century progressed than it had been in earlier times.¹² At the same time, in an age in which Britain acquired and lost one empire in the New World and began a second in South Asia, ideas – and often an ideal – of manliness were increasingly presented as the grounds upon which colonial agency and authority was built. Although Cavalier patriarchalism lost most of its relevance as a political theory with the forced abdication of James II, and although its absolutist implications were fundamentally opposed to the new Whig-capitalist order that solidified after the Glorious Revolution, it nonetheless offered a powerful set of symbolisms through which these ideas of imperial manhood could be conceived and represented. In the colony, the image of the colonist-as-patriarch mapped well onto the paternalist ideology with which proto-liberal imperialism was already being expressed. In

¹¹ The last modern edition preceding Sommerville’s was Peter Laslett’s 1949 printing. Sommerville, preface to *Patriarcha and Other Writings*, by Sir Robert Filmer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), vii.

¹² Dror Wahrman’s is among the best of these studies. Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self*.

Britain itself, the figure of the old patriarch in the form of the country squire offered a performative social position through which the new men of empire and imperial wealth could attempt to embody cultural stability and continuity even as the political and economic paradigms through which they were attaining increasing power were radically shifting.

However, this chapter contends that patriarchalism appears in Defoe not as a workable model for political agency and social order but as a problem. Therefore, patriarchalism's assumptions, I argue, are often not the assumptions upon which *Robinson Crusoe* is based, and a claim to authority in the colony anchored upon the symbol of the father – a patriarchy that would so easily be adapted many decades later to liberal imperialism's insistence on the moral duty of the European to subjugate and civilize – is ultimately put under intense scrutiny.¹³ Somewhat paradoxically for a novel so often read for its exploration of racial or ethnic otherness, questions of gender – of homosociality and of patriarchy – become the sites in which the most troubling implications of Defoe's vision of colonial society in *Robinson Crusoe* are contested and worked through. But Defoe's novel first gets to these questions by probing the foundations of imperial power and political agency, categories that would become linked to the idea of the masculine with increasing emphasis across the course of the century. It is to those foundations that this

¹³ But the rejection of patriarchalism and its veneration of the symbol of the father need not imply a less overtly misogynistic understanding. As E. J. Clery has pointed out, the most virulently chauvinistic discourse in early eighteenth-century Britain came out of the civic humanist tradition of political theory (a tradition generally associated with the beginnings of liberal thought). The collapse of the South Sea Bubble in 1720 brought this strain into greater prominence, as civic humanism had long railed against the “effeminizing” effects of imperial luxury. However, although Clery reads Defoe's 1724 novel *Roxana* within that line of response to the bubble's aftermath, the *Crusoe* saga suggests a view of the feminine as civilizing and socializing – much more in line with a shift in gender discourse Nancy Armstrong and others have identified with Samuel Richardson. Clery, *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-Century England: Literature, Commerce, and Luxury* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

chapter now turns, assessing *Robinson Crusoe*'s relationship to seventeenth-century political theory in order to fully account for how the category of the masculine functions in Defoe's novel.

While I agree with Manuel Schonhorn that we need to take Crusoe's claims to something like kingship seriously to fully understand Defoe's central aims and his novel's treatment of rising imperialism, I diverge from Schonhorn's conclusions as to exactly what Crusoe's sovereignty represents.¹⁴ Whatever Defoe's tensions with fellow Dissenters, fallings out with fellow Whigs, or opportunistic adjustments in political allegiances, Defoe remained a vehement defender of the Revolution Settlement, a merchant-turned-writer who was in many ways a creature of the post-1688 Financial Revolution and whose opposition to royal absolutism was lifelong and apparent early in his adult life when he joined the Duke of Monmouth's failed 1685 rebellion against James II.¹⁵ That his colonial protagonist so easily embraces this philosophy, and is so ready to think of himself as a patriarch in the most draconian sense, points to a central fear about the potentials of the colony itself. In the most general terms, Defoe was an enthusiastic advocate of British colonial expansion in the Americas and a novelist whose characters are repeatedly drawn across oceans to the New World, Africa, and Asia, and he seems to have viewed participation in the colonial project as a chance for radical self-reformation. For

¹⁴ Even twenty years on, Schonhorn's study is one of the very few to bring much rigor to *Robinson Crusoe*'s royalist passages or to resist glossing them as a coherent part of the novel's overall dissenting, Whig ethos. Yet Schonhorn goes on to argue that these moments help us to understand Defoe as himself a royalist thinker – albeit a Williamite royalist rather than a Jacobite. Although Schonhorn makes a compelling case for anti-Lockean thought in many of Defoe's political writings and satires, I argue that his panegyrics to William III and criticism of opposition from William's Whig flank are best attributable to Defoe's aims as a propagandist rather than any kind of sustained endorsement of royalist/patriarchalist ideology, a political theory he spent so much of his career savaging. Schonhorn, *Defoe's Politics*, 141-164.

¹⁵ For the details of Defoe's life, I am indebted to John Richetti's excellent, recent critical biography. Richetti, *The Life of Daniel Defoe* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

the imperial project offered Defoe more than simply a space in which to explore the benefits and possibilities of emergent capital. The colony, and colonial tropes such as the cannibal, present an imaginative realm in which to explore self-mastery through the Enlightenment paradigm of reason, a conceptual terrain on which base, human passions could be harnessed and subjugated through the work of subduing the land and subduing and converting native cultures.¹⁶ Yet *Robinson Crusoe* explores an ominous, obverse potential to colonialism as well – a vision of the imperial agent becoming not a modern man of capital and virtue but a divine-right tyrant.

States of nature and natural man: Filmer, Locke, Hobbes, and *Robinson Crusoe*

If the ideas of political community and agency in *Robinson Crusoe* are far more reactionary than most critics have accounted for, that is not at all to say that the novel is built upon the same kind of atavistic and appetitive longing for recasting and recreating the old patriarchy in which its eponymous character so often indulges. Part of the interpretive problem has been the great tendency to conflate Defoe's protagonist with Defoe himself – to use Crusoe as a kind of allegorical stand-in or spokesman for his creator's generally Whig and definitively post-1688 beliefs and allegiances.¹⁷ Thus, working from the initial assumption that *Robinson*

¹⁶ “Crusoe is able to convert Friday and numerous other savages to civilized behavior, and then some of them to Christianity, because he first has converted himself. The plot of *Robinson Crusoe* is a double-conversion plot... the English colonists had to be converted first so that they became virtuous, humane, and just; by their example, they then could convert the Indians, and together they would prevail against the forces of unredeemed savagery.” Dennis Todd, *Defoe's America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 58.

¹⁷ This is, of course, a problem that originated at the moment of *Robinson Crusoe*'s first emergence from the press and one that Defoe delighted in exacerbating. In the preface to the second *Crusoe* sequel, published in 1720, Defoe explicitly invited readers to think of Crusoe and his author as one and the same: “*Farther, that there is a man alive, and well known too, the actions of whose life are the just subject of these volumes, and to whom all or most part of the story most directly alludes, this may be depended upon for truth, and to this I set my name.*”

Crusoe is a “Whig novel” (an assumption with which I largely agree), critics have attempted to read Defoe’s Caribbean island through the lenses of contract theory and ideologies of property, forcing *Crusoe*’s fantasies through the filter of Locke and Hobbes.¹⁸ In contrast to this hermeneutic strain, this section addresses the Filmerian, patriarchalist allusions of *Crusoe*’s self-imagining. However, the idea that *Crusoe* must be either a Lockean or a Hobbesian remains so dominant that it seems most helpful to arrive at Filmer by first considering whether Locke or Hobbes can be fully sufficient to account for political authority on what Ian Watt once called *Crusoe*’s *île joyeuse*.¹⁹

The line of argument that views *Crusoe* as a predominately Lockean protagonist focuses on both *Crusoe*’s claims to private property and the language of “contract” that appears repeatedly when other people begin arriving on his island.²⁰ In Locke’s account of the foundations of civil society, explaining the origins of property right is fundamental to explaining

Defoe, *Serious Reflections During the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe: With His Vision of the Angelick World* (London: Constable & Company LTD, 1925) vi.

¹⁸ Jonathan Lamb is one critic who, like Schonhorn, has resisted a contractualist reading of *Crusoe*, viewing the irruptions of absolutist language (which, as Lamb correctly notes, alternate with language of submission) as a desire for self-mastery in an alien, and potentially hostile, Caribbean world. This is a largely persuasive reading, but whether *Crusoe*’s driving passion is fearful or appetitive, I contend that Defoe treats this irruption as a serious problem. See Lamb, *Preserving the Self in the South Seas, 1680-1840* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), especially 183-189.

¹⁹ Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 69.

²⁰ Arguing that *RC* incorporates both Locke’s and Hobbes’s version of the state of nature, Stuart Sim and David Walker contend that *Crusoe*’s creation of private property clearly aligns with Locke’s thinking. Sim and Walker, *The Discourse of Sovereignty, Hobbes to Fielding: States of Nature and the Nature of the State* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), 139. Furthermore, it was the text’s contractualist language that led Watt to describe *Crusoe* in the novel’s later pages as acting “like a good Lockean – when others arrive on the island he forces them to accept his dominion with written contracts acknowledging his absolute power (even though we have previously been told that he has run out of ink” (Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 64). The idea that the Whig ideology of property and commerce dominates this novel has remained a common critical theme since Watt’s study. See, for instance, Leon Guilhamet, *Defoe and the Whig Novel: A Reading of the Major Fiction* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2010), 69-94.

the nature of political community itself, and the creation of private property is a crucial marker of the transition out of a state of nature in which everything is held in common. According to *The Second Treatise of Government* (1689), this is accomplished through physical work. The most basic form of property – proprietorship of one’s self – is transmitted to land and belongings through sweat and toil, acquiring in the process something akin to labor value:

Though the Earth, and all inferior Creatures be common to all Men, yet every Man has a *Property* in his own *Person*. This no Body has any Right to but himself. The *Labour* of his Body, and the *Work* of his Hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the State that Nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his *Labour* with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his *Property*. It being by him removed from the common state Nature placed it in, it hath by this *labour* something annexed to it, that excludes the common right of other Men. For this *Labour* being the unquestionable Property of the Labourer, no Man but he can have a right to what that is once joined to, at least where there is enough, and as good left in common for others.²¹

As a great many pages of Crusoe’s narrative consist of recounting his labor to recreate some semblance of European society on the island, there is ample evidence for a claim that Crusoe produces the conditions for the emergence of property rights in this Lockean sense – a nascent form of freeholdership in the New World. Furthermore, the meticulousness with which Crusoe fences off various pieces of his island is notable, although, even before the appearance of other

²¹ Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, in *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 288.

humans, there are compelling reasons for these actions that have nothing to do with demarcating property, as they allow Crusoe to attempt agriculture and animal husbandry.

Crusoe's solitude transforms these boundaries into perhaps even more powerful Lockean symbols, however, as they become boundaries between wildness and cultivation, or between the state of nature and the beginnings of a social state. Defoe's protagonist at points appears fixated on the idea of creating property for its own sake, as when he establishes his almost entirely superfluous "country seat":

I was so Enamour'd of this Place, that I spent much of my Time there, for the whole remaining Part of the Month of *July*; and tho' upon second Thoughts I resolv'd as above not to remove, yet I built me a little kind of a Bower, and surrounded it at a Distance with a strong Fence, being a double Hedge, as high as I could reach, well stak'd, and fill'd between with Brushwood; and here I lay very Secure, sometimes two or three Nights together, always going over it with a Ladder, as before; so that I fancy'd now I had my Country-House, and my Sea Coast-House: And this Work took me up to the Beginning of *August*. (RC 87)

Even without other humans yet in view, Defoe might seem to open a route to tyrannical patriarchy in such passages by way of Lockean property right. At the very least, the closing off of multiple "estates" on his island inserts Crusoe into the early eighteenth-century debate over common usage and property law that E. P. Thompson has shown was central to the Whig ethos of Georgian Britain – with ominous implications for Britain's rural poor.²² Additionally, as Thompson also points out, Locke's idea of the origins of private property was very readily made to legitimate the British conquest of American lands, as the hunter-gatherer society of American

²² Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origins of the Black Act* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975).

Indians did not produce the “improvements” that add labor-value to the land itself.²³ Indeed, America appears in *The Second Treatise* as the state of nature *ne plus ultra*: “Thus, in the beginning all the World was *America*, and more so than that is now.”²⁴ Yet it also appears as a utopia of abundance, in which it would simply make no sense for a man to attempt to remove property from the common, at least not beyond the bounds of simple necessity. With ample land and resources at his disposal, and, crucially, no money in circulation (Locke’s mechanism by which an imbalance of property is legitimated, as labor value must no longer flow into a piece of real property but can instead be channeled into coinage), what reason would a man have to accumulate property?²⁵ Although Crusoe attains considerable wealth at the novel’s end and does return to European society and the realm of commerce and monetary circulation, his actions at this earlier stage do not fully make sense from a strictly Lockean perspective.

To whatever degree Locke could be deployed to underwrite a Whig version of patriarchalism (enshrining the wealthy squire as the center of political authority and agency), an eighteenth-century, Whig squirearchy is not what we see developing on Crusoe’s island. We should remember that Locke’s analysis of property rights is the foundation of a theory advocating the interests of the landed gentry and aristocracy *against* divine-right monarchy. Crusoe’s pronouncement to be both “King and Lord of all this Country indefeasibly” and “Lord of a Manor,” I have suggested, evokes a hodgepodge of competing associations and bodies of discourse. And Locke moves on from his grounding of political rights in rights of property to

²³ Thompson, *Customs in Common* (New York: *The New Press*, 1991), 165.

²⁴ Locke, *Second Treatise*, 301.

²⁵ “For I ask, What would a Man value Ten Thousand, or an Hundred Thousand Acres of excellent Land, ready cultivated, and well stocked too with Cattle, in the middle of the in-land Parts of *America*, where he had no hopes of Commerce with other Parts of the World, to draw *Money* to him by the Sale of the Produce? It would not be worth the inclosing, and we should see him give up again to the wild Common of Nature, whatever was more than would supply the Conveniences of Life to be had there for him and his Family” (Ibid.).

describe his famous social compact, the point at which the state of nature yields fully to civil society:

But because no *Political Society* can be, nor subsist without having in it self the Power to preserve the Property, and in order thereunto punish the Offenses of all those of that Society; there, and there only is *Political Society*, where every one of the Members hath quitted this natural Power, resign'd it up into the hands of the Community in all cases that exclude him not from appealing for Protection to the Law established by it.... And this *puts Men* out of a State of Nature *into* that of a *Commonwealth*.²⁶

Therefore, supreme political authority in Locke's view is created out of a need amongst individual subjects to protect and assert their claims of property. Thus, property precedes sovereignty and dominion, not the obverse as absolutist patriarchalism held and that we will see in Filmerian theory.

In many ways, Locke's compact was not an entirely new idea in 1689. Hobbes had famously described the origins of civil society in similar contractualist terms almost forty years earlier, and both political theorists saw government originating in the decision of the members of a fledgling society to surrender their innate sovereignty to someone else (whether an assembly or a single person) as a way of attaining greater safety and stability than existed in the unpredictable natural state. Of course, the important difference between the two versions of the contractualist moment was that in Locke's account the compact was voidable; maintenance of the social contract depends on the good faith of the sovereign power.²⁷ Should the sovereign fail to uphold

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 325.

²⁷ "Whensoever therefore the *Legislative* shall transgress this fundamental Rule of Society; and either by Ambition, Fear, Folly, or Corruption, *endeavour to grasp* themselves, *or put into the*

its portion of the deal, or should it encroach upon the rights of its subjects, the contract is cancelled and the subjects are free to reorganize society as they see fit. It was upon this conditional view of sovereign authority that Locke built his defense of the deposition of James II, and thus, along with his strident defense of property rights, it was why Locke remained central to Whig thought throughout the long eighteenth century.

But are these the terms of the social contract on Crusoe's island? As pertains to the relationship between Crusoe and Friday, his first human subject, it is unclear that such an agreement exists at all. Although Friday offers his total submission in thanks for Crusoe stepping in as a protector and saving him from death in a cannibal sacrifice at the hands of an enemy Carib tribe, Friday demands and seems to expect no further defense from his new English ruler. In fact, Friday's submission is so complete that he suggests at two points that he has given Crusoe authority over his very life and death, both of which serve to bolster Crusoe's self-image as the benign or magnanimous colonial conqueror (a self-image which seems to begin with Friday's appearance and grow as his island gains more and more inhabitants). A few pages after the pair meet (although the narrative tells us that many months have passed), Crusoe offers to give Friday a boat in which to return to his tribe, an offer that is emotionally devastating to Crusoe's adopted child/subject/slave:

No, no, Friday, (says I), you shall go without me, leave me here to live by my self as I did before. He look'd confused again at that Word, and running to one of the Hatchets which he used to wear, he takes it up hastily, comes and gives it me,

hands of any other an Absolute Power over the Lives, Liberties, and Estates of the People; By this breach of Trust they forfeit the Power, the People had put into their hands, for quite contrary ends, and it devolves to the People, who have a Right to resume their original Liberty, and, by the Establishment of a new Legislative (such as they shall think fit) provide for their own Safety and Security, which is the end for which they are in Society" (Ibid., 412-413).

What must I do with this? says I to him. *You take, kill Friday;* (says he.) *What must I kill you for?* said I again. He returns very quick, *What you send Friday away for? take, kill Friday, no send Friday away.* (RC 191)

Ostensibly, this scene reinforces Crusoe's affection for Friday as Crusoe realizes the extent of Friday's attachment to him, albeit in a highly hierarchized relationship between colonizer and colonized subject. To the extent Defoe's novel presents a narrative of personal reformation and spiritual awakening, Friday's further submission and Crusoe's growing affection function as powerful indicators of Crusoe's moral and religious progress. After all, just before Crusoe suggests Friday will soon have the freedom to return home, Friday had been requesting that Crusoe accompany him back to his tribe in the capacity of a Protestant evangelist, educating Friday's people in Christianity and the technologies of European civilization. The idea that Crusoe would abandon him to his former state of savagery is an unbearable rejection to which Friday indicates death would be much preferable. Crusoe has reformed from his state of original sin and, as Dennis Todd describes it, captivity to his own passions, to a point at which he is now fit to carry the gospel into heathen lands, a measure of progress to which Friday's devotion attests.²⁸

Yet we should not let the progressive-imperialist version of the Crusoe/Friday bond that Crusoe offers stand unchallenged. Friday's submission fits all too conveniently into the vision of political authority that Crusoe has indulged all along – a power-obsessed self-construction that

²⁸ Thus, to extrapolate from Todd's account that "freedom" from the passions in *RC* is achieved through "submission" to divine reason, Friday's abject submission to Crusoe seems to offer him a corollary freedom from his own previous state of depravity in cannibalism. The important distinction, of course, is that Crusoe's submission is (following Puritan doctrine) directly to God, with no human intermediary. The state of the two in a religious hierarchy, then, mirrors the state in which Crusoe arranges them within the island's nascent political society, with Crusoe as a divine-right prince and Friday as subject. See Todd, *Defoe's America*, 75, for a helpful summary of his view of Crusoe's spiritual "sovereignty."

has little to do with religious piety or civilizational advancement. Crusoe the King has claimed to have “the Lives of all my Subjects at my absolute Command” for some time, a claim Friday’s pronouncements serve to reify and ratify. Friday places no conditions upon his European overlord, no threat to withdraw his devotion should Crusoe fail in an obligation to protect him from the enemy tribe that was planning to kill him before Crusoe appeared to save him. Nor does Defoe allow us to attribute this assertion of absolute submission to a singular moment of emotional anguish. Just a few pages after Friday has offered Crusoe his life in exchange for not being banished from the island’s political community, in an entirely different scene, Friday assures Crusoe of his devotion and submission once again. Recounting the reappearance of a tribe of cannibals on the island, Crusoe recalls, “so I ask’d him, Whether if I resolv’d to defend him, he would defend me, and stand by me, and do just as I bid him? He said, *Me die, when you bid die, Master*” (RC 194). Here, Crusoe appears to extend the terms of a Lockean social contract (which is at its heart an offer of mutual protection), but Friday’s response exacts nothing in return for his continued devotion. “*Me die, when you bid die, Master.*” The danger posed by the Caribs’ return is, for Friday, an opportunity to reaffirm his act of submission – and his loyalty – and to reaffirm Crusoe’s position as the island’s absolute patriarch.

Schonhorn is thus correct in denying the supposedly “Lockean” import of this novel’s construction of political authority in the colony, but, in viewing the island as reflecting both Hobbes’s and Filmer’s theories, he underestimates the latter’s presence in Crusoe’s account.²⁹

²⁹ Schonhorn, *Defoe’s Politics*, 160. I also depart from Sim and Walker’s reading, which takes Friday’s status as subject to be taken straight out of *Leviathan*: “...something more fundamental than contract law is involved in establishing power and authority over the person of Friday. The latter’s fear of being returned to the state of nature effectively prevailing in his own culture, leads him to submit to an absolute sovereignty which Crusoe’s Western imperialist character quite naturally leads him to assume.... From then onwards, Friday has ceded his personal sovereignty

Undoubtedly, *Leviathan* (1651), written in support of the Cavalier cause and a text that Hobbes had originally hoped to dedicate to the exiled Charles II, describes a much more autocratic form of sovereignty emerging from the contractualist moment than Locke does.³⁰ Hobbes is not a divine-right theorist, and, as in Locke's *Second Treatise*, sovereignty is produced out of an agreement amongst equals in the state of nature. Locke, however, held that the contract was voidable should the sovereign authority fail in its duties, while Hobbes held that such a right to revolt would make the idea of state sovereignty meaningless and its ability to function in the protective role for which it was created impossible.³¹ Once the sovereign is formed out of every person's diverse, individual sovereignty, it cannot be destroyed by the subjects who created it. In addition, the obligation to abide by the terms of the social contract is entirely on the side of the subjects in Hobbes's account, since the sovereign does not exist prior to the contractualist moment. We cannot discuss the obligations of the sovereign because the sovereign, as sovereign, was not extant to agree to any obligations when it was created:

That he which is made Sovereaign maketh no Covenant with his Subjects beforehand, is manifest; because either he must make it with the whole multitude, as one party to the Covenant; or he must make a severall Covenant with every man.

to the greater power that is Crusoe, transforming himself, willingly enough it would seem, into a Hobbesian subject" (Sim and Walker, *The Discourse of Sovereignty*, 136).

³⁰ Charles distanced himself from Hobbes due to reports that *Leviathan* embraced atheism in certain passages. See Richard Tuck, introduction to *Leviathan*, by Thomas Hobbes (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), lii.

³¹ "And therefore, they that are subjects to a Monarch, cannot without his leave cast off Monarchy, and return to the confusion of a disunited Multitude; nor transferre their Person from him that beareth it, to another Man, or other Assembly of men: for they are bound, every man to every man, to Own, and be reputed Author of all, that he that already is their Sovereaign, shall do, and judge fit it be done: so that any one man dissenting, all the rest should break their Covenant made to that man, which is injustice: and they have also every man given the Sovereignty to him that beareth their Person; and therefor if they depose him, they take from him that which is his own, and so again it is injustice." Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 122).

With the whole, as one party, it is impossible; because as yet they are not one Person: and if he make so many severall Covenants as there be men, those Covenants after he hath the Sovereignty are voyd, because what act soever can be pretended by any one of them for breach thereof, is the act both of himselfe, and of all the rest, because done in the Person, and by the Right of every one of them in particular.³²

For Hobbes, there can be no split sovereignty, no balanced system of authority between the monarch, lords, and commons as the Whig constitutionalists in the eighteenth century would have it. In *Leviathan*, absolute sovereign authority is the linchpin of the entire political structure of civil society, and it must operate above and outside any body of laws or boundaries of contract to remain true sovereign authority.

This version of the contractualist moment appears closer to the emergence from the state of nature that Defoe imagines for Crusoe's island (although, as I will shortly show, Hobbes cannot fully account for Friday's total submission). And it is not only Friday who becomes Crusoe's subject in this abject sense. As more people begin arriving on the island (first Friday's father and a Spanish sailor who had been taken captive by cannibals, later the crew of a mutinous English ship), Crusoe demands virtually the same recognition of his total authority. The captain's dominion aboard his ship is depicted in the same patriarchalist terms in which Crusoe casts his own command on his island, with the former mutineers venerating their captain as "a Father" once they have been outmaneuvered and defeated.³³ However, before Crusoe assists him

³² Ibid., 122-123.

³³ "...they fell down on their Knees to the Captain, and promised with the deepest Imprecations, that they would be faithful to him to the last Drop, and they should owe their Lives to him, and would go with him all over the World, that they would own him for a Father to them as long as they liv'd" (*RC* 227).

in reclaiming his patriarchal title, the captain must first acknowledge Crusoe's sovereignty within Crusoe's own patriarchal domain. Crusoe demands, "That while you stay on this Island with me, you will not pretend to any Authority here; and if I put Arms into your Hands, you will upon all Occasions give them up to me, and do no Prejudice to me or mine, upon this Island, and in the mean time be govern'd by my Orders" (RC 215). Of course, the differences in style and tone between Friday's submission (symbolized in placing Crusoe's foot upon his head) and that of the English captain (executed in the language of oath and contract) are striking. Although both hierarchies invoke the symbol of the father as a way of grounding this authority upon a supposedly deep affective bond between child-subject and father-sovereign, the variance in how these bonds play out suggests the divergent places of European and West Indian in this nascent colony's political community.³⁴ Furthermore, Daniel Carey highlights the tenuous nature of Crusoe's claims to sovereignty over Friday and over his new European subjects. After all, as one man alone in a New World wilderness, Crusoe is not in much of a position to assert his authority should his subjects choose to resist: "The number of oaths, promises, and vows that appear throughout the book is quite startling; they indicate the stability of social and political relations depends on trust and honesty more than on physical force, for all of Crusoe's weaponry."³⁵ Once Crusoe gains actual "subjects," thus realizing his earlier claims to kingship, the exact status of his royalist and patriarchalist self-construction is nevertheless strained and uncertain, and it threatens to collapse if any of these subjects attempts to press the point.

³⁴ For a postcolonial reading emphasizing the master/slave dynamic, see Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1791* (London: Methuen, 1986). However, Srinivas Aravamudan attunes us to the complications of this reading, emphasizing Friday's racially polymorphous nature and the instabilities of the discourse on race in the early eighteenth century. Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans*, 76.

³⁵ Carey, "Reading Contrapuntally: *Robinson Crusoe*, Slavery, and Postcolonial Theory" in *Postcolonial Enlightenment*, eds. Daniel Carey and Lynn Festa (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 126.

This fact does not, however, actually undermine Crusoe's sovereignty in either a Lockean or Hobbesian sense, as the sovereign's power to impose its will in the systems of both theorists has little to do with its legitimacy. Even in Hobbes's absolutist model, mere conquest can give a monarch no right to rule or right to depend on the fealty of a conquered people. It is only when a conquered nation enters into a covenant with the new sovereign that its people are taken out of the state of nature (war) with the conquering monarch: "And after such Covenant made, the Vanquished is a SERVANT, and not before...."³⁶ Without the contractualist moment, Hobbes continues, the vanquished could only be considered a captive, or a slave, and would remain free to rebel whenever he or she saw fit: "(for such men... have no obligation at all; but may break their bonds, or the prison; and kill, or carry away captive their Master, justly:) but one, that being taken, hath corporall liberty allowed him; and upon promise not to run away, nor do violence to his Master, is trusted by him."³⁷ Hence, the very weakness of Crusoe's position can serve to strengthen the concept of a contract as the basis of civil society, a view to which Defoe, opportunistic and self-serving as his political allegiances could sometimes be, adhered throughout his long life as a political writer.

Nevertheless, unsettling moments of the text cause us to question whether Hobbes is even sufficient to account for Crusoe's assumed royalty. Let us return once more to Friday's pledge of obedience before the battle with Caribs who have arrived to sacrifice his father and the Spanish sailor. "*Me die, when you bid die, Master.*" Reasoning out of *Leviathan's* account of sovereignty, this pledge makes no sense. A king's power (or an assembly's power, although Hobbes thought democracy and oligarchy too problematically divided sovereign authority to be good choices for a new society) is nearly absolute once a state's subject's have ceded their

³⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 141.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

natural sovereignty to him. But, in Hobbes, this authority does not go to the point of commanding a subject's life or death, at least as far as the individual subject is concerned. According to *Leviathan*, although a sovereign can commit no act short of renouncing the throne that will void the covenant as pertains to society at large, an individual subject is only bound to obey the sovereign so long as he or (much more rarely) she or it offers protection. When this offer is withdrawn (for instance, when the state imposes a capital sentence in punishment for a crime), the subject is restored to a state of nature and is thus fully within his or her natural right to resist. This, Hobbes continues in one of *Leviathan's* odder passages, is why a prisoner must be kept in chains. It is not that the sovereign fears it is dealing with a bad subject who will resist punishment. Rather, it is that the sovereign recognizes it is not dealing with a true subject anymore at all, but an agent returned to a state of nature: "If the Sovereign command a man (though justly condemned,) to kill, wound, or mayme himselfe; or not to resist those that assault him; or to abstain from the use of food, ayre, medicine, or any other thing, without which he cannot live; yet hath that man the Liberty to disobey."³⁸ The sovereign is not, certainly, released from its duty to execute the punishment on behalf of the state and all its remaining subjects (for whom the maintenance of law is perhaps the most important reason for which they ceded personal sovereignty in the first place). Yet any obligation of the condemned to the state is canceled at the moment the state determines he or she must be put to death.

This would appear to mean little in practice for the functioning of a Hobbesian state. It is a small matter for the mechanisms of justice to overpower and punish a solitary prisoner, and, anyway, the sovereign is acting on behalf of the vast majority in a state who remain subjects and not on behalf of the individual malefactor. But it does mean that there is a central feature of

³⁸ Ibid., 151.

Crusoe's relationship to his subjects (or at the very least to Friday) that cannot be explained in reference to the two, great social-contractualist lines of thought – Hobbesian and Lockean – of Defoe's day. Crusoe's self-stylings, his seemingly absurd pronouncements of being "King and Lord of all this Country indefeasibly" with absolute authority to "hang, draw, give liberty, and take it away," need not reference a basis of power in a covenant at all. Indeed, for a text that so famously urges a Providential reading of nature and man's place within it, and for a protagonist who becomes so committed (whatever his various backslidings and spiritual failings) to viewing his relationship with God in deeply intimate, personal terms, the humanist political philosophers are not the important sources to begin with. Absolutist though he was, Hobbes's decision to ground his idea of a political community that would justify the claims of the House of Stuart in a conjectural state of nature and in human passions places him at odds with an important school in Cavalier thought – the divine-right theorists, most notably Filmer.

Although, like Hobbes, Filmer's political theory is aimed at justifying royal absolutism against the claims of the Roundheads during the Civil War and Commonwealth, Filmer took issue with Hobbes's entire concept of a "state of nature." Working from a literal interpretation of the Book of Genesis, Filmer argues the first political power in the world was patriarchal, and it was born in God's original grant directly to Adam.³⁹ This power, according to Filmer, was

³⁹ Filmer died in 1653. His magnum opus, *Patriarcha: The Naturall Power of Kinges Defended against the Unnatural Liberty of the People*, was published posthumously in 1680, and Locke's *First Treatise* is a direct response to its appearance in print. However, the ideas of *Patriarcha* had appeared in other writings Filmer published during the Civil War and early Commonwealth. One of which, *Observations Concerning the Originall of Government*, took aim at *Leviathan* explicitly: "if also God gave to Adam not only the dominion over the woman and the children that should issue from them, but also over the whole earth to subdue it... I wonder how the *right of nature* can be imagined by Mr Hobbes, which, he saith, is a liberty for 'each man to use his own power as he will for preservation of his own life.'" Filmer, *Observations Concerning the Originall of Government*, in *Patriarcha and Other Writings*, Ed. Johann P. Sommerville (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 187. For a concise biography of Filmer, see

without any limit whatsoever, and he relies on the divine beneficence that supposedly has instilled fathers with dutiful attachment to their children to prevent abuses of this absolute sovereign authority:

I see not then how the children of Adam, or of any man else, can be free from subjection to their parents. And this subjection of children is the only fountain of all regal authority, by the ordination of God himself. It follows that civil power not only in general is by divine institution, but even the assignment of it specifically to the eldest parent, which quite takes away that new and common distinction which refers only power universal as absolute to God, but power respective in regard of the special form of government to the choice of the people. Nor leaves it any place for such imaginary pactions between kings and their people as many dream of.⁴⁰

As Friday's appearance on the island and submission to Crusoe realizes a kingship claim Crusoe has made many pages before, this Filmerian model of sovereignty, with its extreme understanding of patriarchal authority as descending directly from God and depending upon no consent, seems much closer to Crusoe's self-fashioning. Additionally and importantly, it suggests that the father symbol functions as more than simply the reification of the affective tie between subject and lord, but as the very foundations of agency and authority.

Furthermore, there is little question that Crusoe stands as an Adamic figure along a central axis of the novel. Punished by God for an "original sin" by being exiled on a solitary island in an unexplored region the New World, Crusoe's spiritual biography alludes to both pre-

Sommerville, introduction to *Patriarcha and Other Writings*, by Sir Robert Filmer, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), ix-xxiv.

⁴⁰ Filmer, *Patriarcha*, 7.

and postlapsarian versions of the first patriarch. His perpetual struggling with the nature of Providence and his relationship to it – his continuous backslidings into despair occasioning renewed confidence in his Christian God – further suggests the cyclical Genesis mythology:

But now I began to exercise my self with new Thoughts; I daily read the Word of God, and appl'd all the Comforts of it to my present State: One Morning being very sad, I open'd the Bible upon these Words, *I will never, never leave thee, nor forsake thee*; immediately it occur'd, That these Words were to me.... Well then, said I, if God does not forsake me, of what ill Consequence can it be, or what matters it, though the World should all forsake me. (RC 97)

This process of religious chastening followed by religious awakening is central to Todd's argument that *Robinson Crusoe* is concerned with how to develop colonists fit to serve as able missionaries of European civilization in the New World. And, as Carey has also recognized, a form of patriarchalism is clearly visible in the structure of this spiritual journey. Crusoe, having rejected his earthly father in deciding to run away to sea, gains a new father – God – by submitting to his divine will. He is then able to “free” Friday from his state of sin by becoming his substitute father and by becoming his spiritual advisor in the process.⁴¹

Such a reading yields a Crusoe who is a Filmerian patriarch in the most benign terms. His authority over his subject is absolute, yes, but he wields this not as a tyrant but as a religious teacher and guide. Yet although I agree that many passages in Defoe's text point us in this

⁴¹ “Just as the shipwreck and isolation on the island provide the occasion for Crusoe's spiritual transformation, so Friday's encounter with Crusoe and separation from his society become the moment for his own religious journey. Crusoe's conversion requires the recognition of divine mastery and the giving thanks and service to God. Similarly, Friday acquires a new father and a new master in the person of Crusoe, who engages in his religious instruction. This relationship would not make sense if he were Crusoe's slave.” Carey, “Reading Contrapuntally: *Robinson Crusoe*,” 134.

hermeneutic direction, I contend that Defoe does not allow this interpretation (really, Crusoe's self-representation) to stand unchallenged. For despite the patriarchal implications of the Adamic myth, reconstructing this allegory need not point at all toward monarchical absolutism on Earth, and it did not do so for devout Puritan republicans and Whigs. We should remember that John Milton, a strident pamphleteer for the Roundhead cause during the Civil War years, certainly did not offer a defense of royal prerogative in *Paradise Lost*, using the story of the Fall rather to explore the spiritual themes of sin and the soul's redemption. Although Defoe's mariner often urges us to view his own narrative in similar terms, it is the temporal-political implications of a patriarchalist state of nature – and thus a Filmerian much more than Miltonian view of Genesis– that so often seem to drive Crusoe. As he indulges these drives, Crusoe's transformation and characterological development sit uncomfortably with his creator's political thinking and often undermine Crusoe's own claims about the ultimate meaning of his story and his presence in the colonial space. Obviously, the cultural chauvinism implicit in the hierarchizing of religious belief and Old World civilization against New World "savagery" will strike modern readers as problematic enough, but divine-right patriarchy was a deeply flawed concept for Defoe as well and one that he attacked in satire and political pamphlets for his entire career as a writer. Working from the idea of Crusoe-as-patriarch, I will now bring into relief some of Crusoe's more despotic tendencies against the backdrop of Defoe's anti-absolutist writings to suggest the instability and problematics of Crusoe's assumed patriarchal identity.

Passions, tyrannical patriarchs, and empire

One clear point of alignment between Hobbes's view of human nature and Defoe's (a view reflected not only in *Robinson Crusoe* but throughout his entire oeuvre) is a rather bleak

portrayal of mankind as a creature ruled by passions. Early capitalist discourse after the 1688 revolution and Whig ascendancy began to modify seventeenth-century pessimism on this point, with thinkers such as Bernard Mandeville arguing that private, appetitive drives and desires could be harnessed and balanced to produce wealth and advancement. In certain texts, Defoe appears receptive to this point of view.⁴² For example, Defoe's early treatise *An Essay upon Projects* (1697), while at times deploying sharp satire against "projectors" who are essentially depicted as charlatans, displays a markedly idealistic optimism that human society could be reformed in the best interests of all its members.⁴³ But this idea of drives and desires harnessed for public good is not the story of Robinson Crusoe, who instead must learn to conquer his passions by submitting to the divine and to reason, and whose spiritual progress is always in a state of becoming and never complete.⁴⁴ If, as Defoe had written in *Jure Divino*, a universal passion in fallen mankind is a kind of will to power unbridled ("all Men would be Tyrants if they cou'd"), it is a passion Crusoe must also learn to suppress.

Although his initial reaction to the discovery that his island is visited by cannibal tribes is fear, Crusoe eventually moves on to indulge a revenge fantasy of violence bordering on the genocidal. After installing himself as sovereign patriarch, Crusoe prepares to exterminate these

⁴² For a cogent analysis of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' passions/interests/reason debate, see A. O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). The Liberty Fund reprints the entirety of Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* in facsimile. Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees: Or Private Vices, Public Benefits* (Indianapolis: The Liberty Fund, 1988).

⁴³ See, for instance, Defoe's section on "assurances." Defoe, *An Essay upon Projects* (London: Printed by R. R. for Tho. Cockerill, at the Corner of Warwick-Lane, near Pater-noster-Row, 1697), 112-118.

⁴⁴ For Hunter, this was the whole spiritual point of the text: "Defoe's portrait of Crusoe, however, is more orthodox theologically and more accurate psychologically than are the comments of his critics. Crusoe is no Saint. He is an Everyman spiritually in the same sense that he is an Everyman physically.... Though converted, he is still human; his fallen nature, though subdued by grace, is never entirely overcome in this world, and he still is subject to temptation and occasional failure" (Hunter, *Reluctant Pilgrim*, 177).

interlopers into his royal domains, an obsession that temporarily causes him to leave off all his other projects that have attempted to mimic European civilization on the island while serving to index his spiritual advancement:

But my Invention now run quite another way; for Night and day, I could think of nothing but how I might destroy some of these Monsters in their cruel and bloody Entertainment, and if possible, save the Victim they should bring hither to destroy. It would take up a larger Volume than this whole Work is intended to be, to set down all the Contrivances I hatch'd, or rather brooded upon in my Thought, for the destroying these Creatures, or at least frightening them, so as to prevent their coming hither any more. (*RC* 142)

Having imagined himself as the island's absolute king, Crusoe now imagines himself as the conquering evangelist of European civilization, spreading Christianity with sword and musket. Of course, while Crusoe's fantasy here is particularly violent, it rests upon a British justification for imperial conquest already in existence in the early eighteenth century and one that would become of central importance to British imperialist ideology as the century wore on – the “savagery” of native peoples who would benefit from the enlightened despotism of European masters.

Yet, as Crusoe comes to realize, this colonization-as-crusade ethos runs up against a central tenet of British justifications for imperial conquest. A favorite theme of British writers on colonization in the early modern period and eighteenth century was an idea that a British empire would be a kinder, gentler empire than the Spanish and Portuguese empires before it.⁴⁵ Highlighting the atrocities of the Spanish conquest of Mexico or Peru served as the foundation of

⁴⁵ See Todd, *Defoe's America*, 58-59 especially.

a progressive-imperialist ideology that would become increasingly dominant later, during the Second British Empire. Crusoe directly references this longstanding line of British critique when he recounts regaining control over his passions and bringing them back under the sway of his reason:

In the next Place it occur'd to me, that albeit the Usage they thus gave one another, was thus brutish and inhuman; yet it really was nothing to me: These People had done me no Injury.... That this would justify the Conduct of the *Spaniards* in all their Barbarities practis'd in *America*, and where they destroy'd Millions of these People, who however they were Idolaters and Barbarians, and had several bloody and barbarous Rites in their Customs, such as sacrificing human Bodies to their Idols, were yet, as to the *Spaniards*, very innocent People.

(*RC* 145)

Hence, despite his claims of arbitrary, absolute, patriarchal power, Crusoe appears to feel an almost instinctive check on sovereign authority, and the text in such moments reflects a Whiggish faith in the capacity of rationality and reason to prevent a lapse into despotism. Additionally, for a Whig, referencing the Spanish Empire as an example for a king to avoid would have had even greater resonance, as continental European houses like the Hapsburgs or the Bourbons were frequently invoked in decrying systems of royal absolutism. Crusoe's missionary work will be undertaken not by the sword but by reason. When Friday appears, Crusoe will successfully convert him through a course of religious pedagogy, not through coercion.

However, in the end, Crusoe is drawn into a violent confrontation with Carib cannibals, and, while the circumstances provide him with room for ethical casuistry (he is saving other

lives, first Friday's and later Friday's father and the Spanish sailor's), his claim of authority in the New World is nonetheless asserted through an awesome display of European technological advancement. Nor is his response to the cannibals' reappearance justified with reference to a greater good. Regardless of what his "reason" has previously told him about the rectitude of engaging in war with a people who have done no harm to him, the natives' encroachment into his territory and the knowledge of the acts they are about to perform throw Crusoe into a fury that resurrects his earlier fixation on destroying them:

I observ'd also, that they were landed not where they had done, when *Friday* made his Escape; but nearer to my Creek.... This abhorrence of the inhumane Errand these Wretches came about, fill'd me with such Indignation, that I came down again to *Friday*, and told him, I resolv'd to go down to them, and kill them all; and ask'd him, If he would stand by me? (*RC* 195)

The speed and readiness with which Crusoe abandons his resolution to avoid armed conflict with these natives suggests more than a latent fear in this novel of the messy realities of colonial rule. A man who, removed from the confines and constraints of European society, has claimed such absolute authority for himself begins to follow the same pattern of imperial brutality that he so forcefully criticized the Spanish for pursuing. Moreover, the technological differential between Carib society and Crusoe is so large that his power attains an almost godlike degree that no European despot claiming his seat by divine right in Europe itself could ever have reached. Because they have with them a few guns salvaged from Crusoe's wrecked ship, Crusoe and Friday are able to defeat a much larger group of Caribs, who are so frightened by the display of firepower that they flee the island never to return: "[Friday] believed they would tell their People, they were all kill'd by Thunder and Lightning, not by the Hand of Man" (*RC* 204). In

the view of the Caribbean natives, Crusoe becomes a god. Autocratic patriarchy reborn in the New World has the potential for absolute authority virtually unbridled, these passages suggest. In addition, the child-servant/father-master relationship that he has entered into with Friday here serves not as an affective, pedagogical vehicle for European reason and Christian morality but rather to enable a pedagogy of brutality. The violent confrontation allows Crusoe to save Friday's father and a European sailor, but Defoe sets this happy outcome against an ominous undercurrent.

As I have indicated, for Schonhorn, Crusoe comes to allegorize William III, a just monarch whose valor and honor were battle-tested and whose commitment to his subjects' freedom was proven (at least according to Defoe). It is not my aim to correct Schonhorn's emphasis on the centrality of the monarch for Defoe's version of constitutionalism. But against Schonhorn, I would ask, even if we allow that William III provided, in Defoe's imagination, an ideal model of a monarch who could truly serve as the foundation of sovereign authority, to what extent would Crusoe correspond to this blueprint?⁴⁶ Defoe's satiric poem "The True-Born Englishman" (1701) castigates William's Whig critics who had objected in increasingly strident terms to Britain's retention of a large standing army after the remnants of James's forces had been defeated at the Battle of the Boyne.⁴⁷ While Defoe is, to put it mildly, lavish in his praise

⁴⁶ Schonhorn suggests precisely this – that Crusoe serves as an avatar of William III. Writing of how Crusoe's relationship with Friday is modified by the reappearance of the latter's father, Schonhorn argues that "it could be noted that, by losing his putative son to his real father, Crusoe is once again alone, absent children like his predecessor, model, and alter ego, William III, able to be a true *pater patriae* to his kingdom, a monarch free of familial and dynastic corruption" (Schonhorn, *Defoe's Politics*, 161).

⁴⁷ Richetti, *Life of Daniel Defoe*, 12-16 provides a lucid discussion of the political background of this poem. Essentially, William wished to maintain British military strength because he feared the impending death of Carlos II of Spain would upset the balance of power in Europe, as it would give Louis XIV an opening to press the Dauphin's claim to the Spanish throne and thus the entire Spanish Empire. This did in fact happen, causing the War of the Spanish Succession

of William – “Listen ye virgins to the charming sound /... Your early offerings to this altar bring; / Make him at once a lover and a king”⁴⁸ – he also makes it clear that William’s legitimacy rests on his faithful execution of his obligation to uphold the law of the realm and the English constitution itself. Defoe has little regard for kings who gained their crown in conquest. William I, for example is “The great invading Norman”⁴⁹ who divided England amongst every soldier or lackey who in any way assisted his invasion, and who ruled without regard to any Parliament whatsoever. And Defoe is quite clear – a king who fails in his duties to his people loses his right to sovereignty:

When kings the sword of justice first lay down,
They are no kings, though they possess the crown.
Titles are shadows, crowns are empty things,
The good of subjects is the end of kings;
To guide in war, and to protect in peace:
Where tyrants once commence, the kings do cease:
For arbitrary power’s so strange a thing,
It makes the tyrant, and unmakes the king.⁵⁰

Crusoe’s claims to absolute authority would seem to bring this tyrant/king distinction to the forefront. It is true that within a progressive-imperialist ideology his reign proves beneficial to Friday, who gains the true knowledge of Christianity and freedom from his past state of

(1701-1714). Suggestively, Carlos himself, a disfigured and severely handicapped product of quite literally centuries of Hapsburg inbreeding, provides a convenient foil for Defoe’s vision of a William as a strong and virtuous monarch committed to British constitutionalism.

⁴⁸ Defoe, “The True-Born Englishman: A Satyr,” in *The True-Born Englishman and Other Writings*, eds. P. N. Furbank and W. R. Owens (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), ll. 933-936.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, l. 195.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, ll. 771-776.

savagery. But if arbitrary power leads to the death of legitimacy in tyranny, Crusoe's immense power by virtue of his access to European technology pushes his patriarchy toward what Defoe, as in this early poem, would label illegitimacy. He has, at the very least, the potential to become not a first father in his colony but a despot.

In addition, Defoe's criticisms of William's Whig opponents rest upon these opponents mistakenly labeling William a "tyrant." The Whigs' complaints against James II – a "true" tyrant – had been fully valid, according to Defoe, and Englishmen were well within their rights to resist. "The True-Born Englishman" aims not at the bounds of subjects' authority to depose a corrupt prince but rather, like in much of Defoean satire, their base passions and human nature which cause them to fail to recognize a virtuous prince when they finally find one:

William the great successor of Nassau,
Their prayers hears, and their oppressions saw:
He saw and saved them: God and him they praised;
To this their thanks, to that their trophies raised.
But glutted with their own felicities,
They soon their new deliverer despise
.....
Their harps of praise are on the willows hung,
For Englishmen are ne're contented long.⁵¹

Against a true tyrant, Defoe never questioned subjects' natural authority to revoke sovereignty. And, in *Jure Divino*, published five years after "The True-Born Englishman," Defoe took aim

⁵¹ Ibid., ll. 692-792.

explicitly at divine-right patriarchalism. In a footnote to Book IV, Defoe acknowledges these lines were written with Filmer in mind:

Some have been so absurd as to bring in,
Divine Commands concurring with the Sin,
That Heaven the High Performance so requires,
And God himself commands whate'er the Prince desires....⁵²

According to Defoe, no prince has the authority to demand the sort of blind obedience Crusoe appears to desire. It is precisely this hunger for tyrant-forming arbitrary rule that Defoe argues throughout *Jure Divino* is a defining feature of man's fallen state.

Moreover, the menace of Crusoe's claim to patriarchal authority is apparent in more than just theoretical or speculative terms. Even if Defoe intended the relationship between Friday and Crusoe to be largely one of affection and devotion, Crusoe has more clearly failed another non-European who has come under his "sovereignty." The episode in question occurs before Crusoe has been shipwrecked and long before he has begun to fantasize about a reign as an Adamic king. Nevertheless, it constitutes the betrayal of someone who had pledged his fealty to Crusoe in terms almost as absolute as Friday would much later. Early in the novel, during a voyage to West Africa (the transatlantic slave trade haunts this text throughout), Crusoe is taken captive by Moorish pirates. He eventually makes his escape with the help of Xury, a boy of unspecified ethnicity though seemingly North African, who is a slave of the pirate leader and who swears his allegiance to Crusoe:

Xury, if you will be faithful to me I'll make you a great Man, but if you will not stroak your Face to be true to me, *that is, swear by Mahomet and his Father's*

⁵² Defoe, *Jure Divino*, ll. 90-91.

Beard, I must throw you into the Sea too; the Boy smil'd in my Face and spoke so innocently that I could not mistrust him; and swore to be faithful to me, and go all over the World with me. (RC 22)

At first, this appears to establish a European-father/non-European-son relationship that looks very similar to Crusoe's later bond with Friday. As Crusoe's subsequent monarchical authority is deeply imbricated with his patriarchal authority according to the Filmerian ideology Crusoe aligns with, the differences in the specifics of the two situations are minor. Indeed, as they sail the North African coast together, Crusoe and Xury form a community every bit as isolated as Crusoe's later community on the island. But if "the good of subjects" defines and constrains kingly power, Crusoe is guilty of a profound abdication of responsibility, for he sells Xury into slavery to a Portuguese sea captain who rescues them:

he offer'd me also 60 Pieces of Eight more for my Boy *Xury*, which I was loath to take, not that I was not willing to let the Captain have him, but I was very loath to sell the poor Boy's Liberty, who had assisted me so faithfully in procuring my own. However, when I let him know my Reason, he own'd it to be just, and offer'd me this Medium, that he would give the Boy an Obligation to set him free in ten Years, if he turn'd Christian; upon this, and *Xury* saying he was willing to go, I let the Captain have him. (RC 30)

If, for Defoe, patriarchal and sovereign legitimacy lasts only as long as the patriarch/sovereign faithfully upholds his part of the contractual agreement with his subjects, this episode has very ominous implications for later moments when Crusoe explicitly claims his kingly status. It is hard to accept Xury's "consent" to abandonment by Crusoe as anything other than wishful thinking on Crusoe's part as he attempts to provide ethical cover for this act of betrayal.

Of course, in speculating about Defoe's intended meaning, we must be careful, as Roxann Wheeler cautions us, not to attribute to him a twenty-first-century view of either slavery or of patriarchal ideology.⁵³ Nevertheless, I would contend that even reading Crusoe as embodying the most reactionary of philosophies (which Filmerian patriarchy certainly was by the early Georgian period), Crusoe's actions here represent a marked moral failure. As I alluded to above, for Filmer, one central feature of the Adamic patriarchy that made the entire system function was the powerful affective ties God had instilled in Adam and in subsequent fathers, who are all Adam's heirs, to their children. Subjects/children had no right to rebel, and the patriarch's authority was complete. But when all was working according to divine plan, Filmer argued, the father would always attempt to act in his children's best interest anyway because he was bound to do so by what Filmer referred to as "the law of nature."⁵⁴ Yet Crusoe's motivation for selling Xury's liberty is entirely self-serving – monetary gain. Even more strikingly, Crusoe receives exactly sixty pieces of silver (one of the text's multiple moments of numeric specificity), which, as Thomas Keymer notes, is exactly twice the sum Judas is supposed to have received for his betrayal of Jesus.⁵⁵

⁵³ Wheeler, "Powerful Affections: Slaves, Servants, and Labours of Love in Defoe's Writing," in *Defoe's Footprints: Essays in Honour of Maximillian E. Novak*, eds. Robert M. Maniquis and Carl Fisher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 127. Defoe's ambivalence on the question of slavery has been explored by numerous critics. Guilhamet nicely encapsulates Defoe's fraught attitudes on the subject, noting that while Defoe condemns the cruelty of transatlantic slavery in practice, he also at other points in his writings appears to believe it could exist as a kinder, more just system, at least in theory. Guilhamet, *Defoe and the Whig Novel*, 156-158.

⁵⁴ "There is no nation that allows children any action or remedy for being unjustly governed; and yet for all this every father is bound by the law of nature to do his best for the preservation of his family. But much more is a king always tied by the same law of nature to keep this general ground, that the safety of his kingdom be his chief law," (Filmer, *Patriarcha*, 35).

⁵⁵ Keymer, introduction to *Robinson Crusoe*, by Daniel Defoe (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), xxxviii.

We could, perhaps, choose to read this disturbing transaction as indexing Crusoe's still unrepentant state. When Friday places himself under Crusoe's dominion, Crusoe is a much older and (by his account) wiser patriarch, well advanced in his spiritual education. However, Defoe makes such a charitable reading difficult. Crusoe will look back on his betrayal of Xury with putative regret only twice and only briefly, and the second and last time comes well into his exile on his island and long after he has presumably begun his journey to redemption: "but my Head run mightily upon the Thought of getting over to the Shore. Now I wish'd for my Boy *Xury*, and the long Boat, with the Shoulder of Mutton sail, with which I sail'd above a thousand Miles on the Coast of *Africk*; but this was in vain" (RC 106). For one thing, this scene reminds us that, for all of Crusoe's self-assurances that he has accepted the fate Providence has bestowed on him and come to view it even as a blessing, Crusoe's true mental state never appears nearly that resigned, and contemplating his escape (here by sailing to the South American mainland) is a perpetual fixation. The adolescent boy seems to occur to Crusoe only as a mental association, a memory of a time when he had access to a seaworthy boat and of a time that appears equivalent to this object itself. There is no indication Crusoe feels any sorrow for abandoning Xury or any sense that he feels that he failed in his patriarchal duty as an adoptive father figure in selling him. As with so much of Crusoe's narrative, we must question here the veracity and degree of his redemption, and Xury stands as a troubling prehistory of Crusoe's eventual ascendance to the status of colonist-patriarch.

I want to stop well short of suggesting the Xury episode constitutes a full assault on the system of slavery, which would be surprising in a novel published more than a quarter-century before an abolitionist movement began in earnest in Britain. A fantasy of consent and devotion within a master-slave relationship is a feature of many of Defoe's novels, which put forward an

idea of wage labor weakening a system of affective bonds that inhere in patriarchy as a fundamental problem of modernity itself.⁵⁶ But in concluding this section, I want to explore an alternate interpretive possibility for episodes such as this, one every bit as culturally chauvinistic in its initial assumptions as what Uday Singh Mehta famously termed “liberal imperialism” would later be but one also deeply skeptical of the meaning and forms of colonial power and colonial engagement. So far, I have pursued the idea of the return of despotic patriarchs in colonial man as an unsettling force Defoe associates with the European past. However, we should remember that the novel’s extreme act of symbolic submission – the moment when Friday places his head under Crusoe’s foot – results not from the demand of the colonizer but as the act of the colonized. We can certainly question (as virtually every critic to take up that textual site has) the degree and nature of Friday’s agency here, as Crusoe has just displayed his vast technological advantage. Nevertheless, it is Friday who appears to force the issue of sovereignty – to demand Crusoe fulfill the role of patriarch about which he has previously only fantasized. By this reading, it is thus the very contact with the other in the colonial space that produces a model of agency and authority Defoe deplored. Homi K. Bhabha has used the idea of “sly civility” to describe a fear of the colonizers’ loss of authority by a loss control of semiotics and language as colonial subjects adopt the modes, forms, or words of the European imperialists but redeploy them in an alien system and to their own perpetually (from the colonizer’s point of view) opaque ends.⁵⁷ In Defoe’s novel, it is not that the colonized (Friday) speaks a language that appears familiar on the surface but possesses an incomprehensible content. It is, rather, that Friday speaks a language *Robinson Crusoe*’s Whig readers wish to consign to their own past but that Crusoe, transported to the Caribbean, is unable to suppress. The colony, thus, subverts the

⁵⁶ Wheeler, “Powerful Affections,” 127.

⁵⁷ Bhabha, “Sly Civility,” in *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 132-144.

developmental trajectory the imperialist attempts to bring with him to the New World, remaining retrograde while simultaneously calling forth the Old World's own political demon in Europe's colonizing representatives.

In other words, to whatever degree Defoe did embrace a nascent progressive-imperialist ideology, and whatever residual fantasies of premodern patriarchy his novels may have indulged, it is also clear that *Robinson Crusoe* is subtended by a fear, sometimes latent but quite often very powerful, of colonial rule devolving into arbitrary despotism of the kind Defoe associated with the Stuart court. Yet the potentialities of empire are, of course, not entirely bleak in this novel, and the New World also presented for Defoe a profoundly attractive imaginative landscape for self-reformation and reconstruction. In this chapter's final section, I want to set the more clearly "Whig" components of *Robinson Crusoe* against these despotic, patriarchal tensions to explore what this novel advances as a more appropriate model of manliness in an imperial age and how these competing accounts of colonial man intersect.

'Being the third Son of the Family, and not bred to any Trade'

Certainly any idea or ideal of "manliness" is deeply imbricated in patriarchal ideology, and I have thus far mainly discussed Defoe's treatment of that ideology as a foundation for political authority. As Dror Wahrman shows us, however, the early Georgian period may be too early to conceive of masculinity and femininity through the strongly biological and rigid associations that they often carried later in the century.⁵⁸ One striking piece of evidence in support of Wahrman's thesis can be found in Filmer's political theory. Despite his fixation on fathers as the roots of political community and sovereignty, Filmer seems to feel no need to draw

⁵⁸ Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self*, 166-264.

any distinction between a king or a queen exercising this authority or to explain why a queen is authorized to assume the same patriarchal role. When Elizabeth I appears in Filmer's texts, she does so simply as another example of a monarch functioning as the supreme sovereign of the realm.⁵⁹ Thus, it seems right to think of even Defoe, writing in the early eighteenth century, as raising this concept of patriarchy mainly to think through the implications and possibilities of self-construction in imperial modernity rather than to prescribe or proscribe forms of gendered behavior defined explicitly by sex.

There is no question that the colonial space also offered women attractive or intriguing potentials for such transformative experiences, as we can see, for instance, in *Moll Flanders* (1721), in which the eponymous character's behavioral and psychological rehabilitation, as well as economic and social advancement, comes by way of transportation to Maryland and Virginia. But it is also telling that there is no clear corollary in Moll Flanders's experiences to the ominous pull of despotic patriarchy to which Crusoe is drawn. As Todd notes, Moll's desire for self-mastery and control over her own destiny is thoroughgoing throughout the novel, unlike Crusoe, who purportedly begins his moral recovery and stakes his claim to political dominion after submitting to God's will and hence surrendering this desire for control (at least supposedly).⁶⁰ In

⁵⁹ See, for instance, Filmer, "The Free-holders Grand Inquest," in *Patriarcha and Other Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 124-129.

⁶⁰ Todd, *Defoe's America*, 127. That Moll retains her agency and self-command right through the novel's end – even within the hierarchical world of eighteenth-century marriage – can be seen in the fact that Moll, through her myriad successful schemes and many (often criminal) talents, controls her husband's finances and even his social rank: "HERE we had a supply of all sorts of Cloaths, as well for my Husband, as for myself; and I took especial care to buy for him all those things that I knew he delighted to have; as two good long Wigs, two silver hilted Swords, three or four fine Fowling peices, a fine Scarlet Cloak; and in a Word, every thing I could think of to oblige him; and to make him appear, as he really was, a very fine Gentleman." Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, ed. G. A. Starr (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 340. Although Moll describes these purchases as an attempt to "oblige" her husband, there is no doubt

this chapter's final pages, I will explore an idea of manliness and how this should be understood in imperial modernity as inflecting Defoe's entire account of colonialism in *Robinson Crusoe*. Whereas, on the one hand, the character Crusoe is pulled toward an archaic (for a Whig like Defoe), premodern, patriarchal absolutism, Defoe's novel as a whole also looks toward a newer model of masculinity rooted in a merchant ethos as a more hopeful possibility offered by empire and imperial capital.

What this emergent form of manliness might mean, however, and whether it opposes or coopts the despotic old patriarchy that sits so uneasily at the heart of the *Crusoe* saga, is a question that itself presents as a source of uncertainty or ambivalence within Defoe's narrative. We can begin to draw out this tension by bringing some critical pressure to the issue of just what, exactly, Crusoe's "original sin" consists of and how this sin is ultimately redeemed or resolved, if at all. The novel's fronted position is that Crusoe's lapsarian moment is failing to take his father's advice to avoid a seafaring life and instead settle into "the upper Station of *Low Life*" (*RC* 6). This "station" remains rather vague, but it appears to imply either the life of a wealthy tradesman or a non-titled member of the gentry, or, in more modern terms, a boundary space somewhere between petit bourgeois and bourgeois proper. In either case, this account of Crusoe's great failing would advance a relatively domesticated adult manhood against that of the maritime adventurer driven by perpetual wanderlust.

For a brief moment straddling the end of the first *Crusoe* novel and the beginning of the second, Defoe's hero does appear to settle down into this state that his father recommended to the teenage Crusoe. Returning to England after his three decades of exile, and finding himself quite wealthy due to the fidelity of the friends who were entrusted with his money and property,

which of the pair is the one empowered in and able to negotiate the financial and economic spheres, as well as the socio-economic sphere of class.

Crusoe becomes a gentleman farmer – and takes a wife. A shadowy presence in these texts, who is mentioned only fleetingly in the first novel (where she is killed off almost as soon as she is introduced) and afforded barely more space in the second, Crusoe’s wife nonetheless appears to represent a powerful, affective force actually capable of checking the passionate drives that have, ostensibly, been the source of his many trials. Although she, like Friday or the Spanish sailor or the English captain before her, pledges her fidelity to Crusoe and willingness to join him on the seas if he should leave England again, her own wishes clearly oppose this, and for the first time since leaving his parents, he appears governed by needs and desires other than his own:

This affectionate Behavior of my Wife’s brought me a little out of my Vapours, and I began to consider what I was doing; I corrected my wandring Fancy, and began to argue with my self sedately, what Business I had after threescore Years, and after such a Life of tedious Sufferings and Disasters, and closed in so happy and easy a Manner: I say, what Business I had to rush into new Hazards, and put my self upon Adventures fit only for Youth and Poverty to run into?⁶¹

It is not the power of patriarchy that checks his passion but the influence of his wife (one of the very few women to appear in this strongly homosocial trilogy), raising the possibility for moral renewal in a feminized, domestic space that Nancy Armstrong traces to Samuel Richardson.⁶²

Here, at the beginning of the first sequel, Crusoe appears on the verge of becoming the happy

⁶¹ Defoe, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, Being the Second and Last Part of His Life, and Strange Surprising Accounts of His Travels Round three Parts of the Globe* (London: Printed for W. Taylor at the Ship in Pater-Noster Row, 1719), 6.

⁶² Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, 108-134.

squire, anchoring and prospering in a bucolic English countryside, an icon of masculinity that would become so persistent in an increasingly imperial Britain.⁶³

However, the texts soon recoil from this influence and from this domesticated version of masculinity. Crusoe's reformation lasts only for the few paragraphs in which his wife lives, and her hasty and rather haphazard dismissal from the narrative suggests a rejection and expurgation of the feminine. The short history of Crusoe's marriage thus suggests the necessity of commerce (social, romantic, and familial) between men and women in order for the successful completion of a masculine developmental trajectory – a final state in which the passions are tempered and channeled – only to abruptly reassert a masculine unrestraint that I have argued lies behind Crusoe's fantasies of absolutist patriarchy. It also calls into question the truthfulness of Crusoe's claims of "reformation" (a persistent claim of Defoe's narrators that always appears at least partially suspect). Yet while this extremely narrow focus on the masculine and virtual elision of women in the Crusoe texts indicates a form of retrograde patriarchy in operation, Crusoe's ultimate refusal to constrain his passionate drives undercuts premodern patriarchalism's elevation of the father-as-despot and of bloodline as defining character. Though we are told it constitutes his "original sin," Crusoe's rejection of his father's power in order to be able to find his own way also places him fully within Defoe's generally Whig/capitalist paradigm that emphasized personal merit and virtue – *not* consanguinity and the greatness of one's ancestors.⁶⁴

In *The Compleat English Gentleman*, a conduct manual for well-to-do young men left unfinished at the time of his death in 1731, Defoe had explicitly opposed the ideology of birthright and descent, holding it as countering an idea of manliness based in proper education

⁶³ In the few pages in which his wife is present in the text, Crusoe even comes to see this as "the most agreeable Life that Nature was capable of directing" (Defoe, *The Farther Adventures*, 7).

⁶⁴ On Whiggism and its emphasis on bourgeois "virtue," see J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*.

and personal integrity: “The Gentleman is to be represented as he really is, and in a figure which he cannot be a Gentleman without; I mean as a Person of Merit and Worth; a Man of Honour, Virtue, Sense, Integrity, Honesty, and Religion, without which he is Nothing at all.”⁶⁵ He goes on to contrast this supposedly English way of assessing “gentlemanliness” with the term’s definition on the continent, specifically Venice and Poland, where, Defoe writes, “the notions of nobility in blood are at this time carryed to the highest and most ridiculous extreme.”⁶⁶ Of course, this idea that blood and family are far less important than action and education does not fully counter Crusoe’s assertion that disobeying his father is the reason for his long punishment and work at redemption. At the same time, it does suggest a definite skepticism to station attained solely through familial ties which would undermine the social and moral value of Crusoe’s wealth had he followed the path his father laid out for him. Crusoe’s father promises him “that he would do well for me, and endeavour to enter me fairly into the Station of life which he had been just recommending to me; and that if I was not very easy and happy in the World, it must be my meer Fate or Fault that must hinder him” (RC 7). Yet Defoe’s focus on virtue and merit elsewhere would seem to demand toil and test to be proven. Ease produced by familial connection would appear to lead, instead, to an aberrant version of manliness, un-English, and associated with corrupted foreign practices.⁶⁷ In rejecting his father’s aid and

⁶⁵ Defoe, *The Compleat English Gentleman*, ed. Karl D. Bülbring (London: David Nutt, 1890), 21.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁶⁷ Indeed, Stephen H. Gregg’s new study of masculinity in Defoe’s verse and prose outlines a more modern understanding of Crusoe’s “original sin” than critics generally have, one more clearly in an eighteenth-century, Whig mode of capital and trade. In a reading that I think helps bring into full relief the competing historical tensions and ideology at play in *Robinson Crusoe*, Gregg argues that suppressing passion and proving manly virtue through his toil is the spiritual aim of Crusoe’s exile. Bringing Crusoe under a regime of reason will place him in contrast to a feminized aristocracy, the members of which, Gregg continues, are represented by Crusoe’s

guidance, Crusoe, “the third Son of the Family, and not bred to any Trade” (RC 5), gives way to an indulgence of his own drives that undercuts the supremacy of his father’s patriarchal position. It is an assertion of agency that perhaps gestures toward those autocratic self-imaginings Crusoe so often voices – moments at which his own fantasies and desires are the only ones in view – but that frees a third son to seek his own fortune and build his own claims for authority in the colony.

This paradigmatic and epistemic struggle waged across the *Crusoe* saga, one which pits Filmerian and Lockean versions of masculinity against one another, is at one level, as I have suggested throughout, the struggle of the residual and the emergent. In many locations in Defoe’s trilogy, the residual appears as the ascendant force. Yet we must also remember that, even as Crusoe and the novels themselves at times appear to delight in the power-potential and possibility for radical self-imagining in the colony that residual patriarchy appears to represent, these drives are also cast throughout as the source of Crusoe’s ongoing misery. Nor is the misery Crusoe’s alone. While the first novel – with its constant cataloging of the success of Crusoe’s

father as enslaved to passion. Gregg, *Defoe’s Writings and Manliness: Contrary Men* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), 61.

In laying out the benefits of “the middle station,” Crusoe the elder tells his son that tradesmen and lower gentry are “not subjected to so many Distempers and Uneasiness either of Body or Mind, as those were who, by vicious Living, Luxury and Extravagancies on one Hand, or by hard Labour, Want of Necessaries, and mean or insufficient Diet on the other Hand, bring Distempers upon themselves” (RC 6). Where Gregg’s reading becomes less illuminative of the central anxieties and tensions underlying *Robinson Crusoe*, I would argue, is in establishing a relatively simple binary underlying Defoe’s thinking between “unmanly” and “manly” modalities. The novel seems less interested, I think, in sorting out what behavior counts as masculine, what feminine, than in staging two very different understandings of masculinity against one another. Though Gregg makes a compelling case for appetitive passions being seen as deleterious, unmanly, and feminine in this period, the word “feminine” never appears in *Robinson Crusoe*, and the word “manly” only once, and then to describe Friday: “He had a very good Countenance, not a fierce and surly Aspect; but seem’d to have something very manly in his Face, and yet he had all the Sweetness and Softness of an *European* in his Countenance too, especially when he smiled” (RC 173). It is notable that “manly” appears here as an adjective not reinforcing a gendered European dominance over feminized natives (as Edward Said and others have shown is a commonplace trope of later orientalism and nineteenth-century imperial ideology), but rather as a descriptor opposing European “Sweetness and Softness.”

various projects – leaves us with an ultimately hopeful impression of progress in the colonial state, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* is much bleaker. Upon his return to his American colony, Crusoe finds the political community of which he once styled himself king has descended into a state of perpetual conflict. Crusoe sets about reforming the island's habitants and their system of self-governance, seeming to recreate the first novel's indexing of Crusoe's own education with the development of his island. But the moment at which the island is finally dismissed from the narrative (about halfway through the first sequel) is haunting:

I have now done with my Island, and all Manner of Discourse about it; and whoever reads the rest of my *Memorandums*, would do well to turn his Thoughts entirely from it, and expect to read the Follies of an old Man, not warn'd by his own Harms, much less by those of other Men, to beware of the like; not cool'd by almost forty Years of Misery and Disappointments, not satisfy'd with Prosperity beyond Expectation, not made cautious by Affliction and Distress beyond Imitation.⁶⁸

As Crusoe sails away from the Western hemisphere never to return, the sequel's prose destroys the sense of order and security his attempts to restructure his colony had created. For one thing, in emphasizing Crusoe's own incapacity to truly reform at the moment in which we leave the island entirely, Defoe reawakens those same latent and overt fears of patriarchal tyranny in the colonial space that we have traced above. After all, what evidence do we have that the island society is not on the verge of collapse into disorder, as it collapsed from a similar, seemingly ordered state so soon after Crusoe's first departure? The islanders' security and survival has appeared to depend on the presence of king who is willing to stay with them only as long as his

⁶⁸ Defoe, *The Farther Adventures*, 200.

colony-building project interests him. In discarding Crusoe's patriarchal domain as a register of his spiritual progress – and in suggesting that Crusoe never really reforms at all – the text underscores the danger presented by his yearning for these possibilities of power and authority.

What we witness ultimately within the New World are competing potentialities – competing models of self-representation – pulling Crusoe in opposing directions. With no existing political and economic society on the island, and no existing class structure to enforce ironclad distinctions between aristocracy and commons, Crusoe is free to construct himself along any axes and modalities he wishes. His desire for power manifests in aping old patriarchalism as he fashions himself an Adamic father and absolutist king. However, set against this is a Whig vision of personal and social development, reflected in Crusoe's inconsistent manifestation of a Weberian work ethic. It is the sweat of his brow that not only, as Stephen H. Gregg suggests, has the potential to index and enable Crusoe's conquering of passion with reason, but that also allows him to begin to reshape the island in the image of English society, however fleetingly:

I had never handled a Tool in my Life, and yet in time by Labour, Application, and Contrivance, I found at last that I wanted nothing but I could have made it, especially if I had had Tools; however I made abundance of things, even without Tools, and some with no more Tools than an Adze and a Hatchet, which perhaps were never made that way before, and that with infinite Labour. (*RC* 59)

In one sense, as Maximillian E. Novak long ago noted, this narrative of toil is undercut by the fact that Crusoe is greatly aided by the presence of many European tools and raw materials he was able to salvage from his wrecked ship, which miraculously obliges him in remaining stuck near shore on a sandbar for several weeks.⁶⁹ But this, to me, rather powerfully reflects a reality

⁶⁹ Novak, *Economics*, 52.

of colonialism itself and suggests the degree to which the novel is aware that the *tabula rasa* myth of the New World is, ultimately, fantasy. Because, of course, the island is *not* an Adamic landscape, an unpeopled paradise bridging a lapsarian moment. Crusoe's ability to appropriate his island, bring it out of a "state of nature," take proprietorship under a Lockean view, or envision himself as the first father with a divine right to dominion in a Filmerian view, depends on a willful blindness to a central truth – he is not the first man here. While the Carib tribes may suggest for Defoe a natural state before political community, there is the uncomfortable knowledge that his protagonist has entered a world with its own belief systems and own set of social and familial relationships. It is a knowledge that makes the autocratic, patriarchal drive – already deeply problematic for a Whig like Defoe – all the more ominous.

The colonial site in Defoe's first novel is a complex web of imaginative possibilities, presented and worked through in the emergence and subsidence of ideas of male authority and agency. It is in the conceptual setting of the New World that Crusoe is pulled between two models of male behavior – the old patriarch who is "King and Lord of all this country indefeasibly" and the modern merchant/tradesman who roots his identity in, and rehabilitates his corrupted psyche through, a toil-enabled progress to virtue. The latter is, I contend, the optimistic potential of empire for Defoe, enacting in a pattern of male behavior the ideology of development and progress that would underwrite the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' liberal imperialism. Of course, the model of imperial manliness that emerges from the *Crusoe* saga is one largely without an accompanying theory of the feminine, a blindness all the more vexing given Defoe's highly agential and strongly developed female protagonists in other novels and a blindness that would be almost inconceivable in the later texts that this dissertation explores. But the residual, tyrannical father will remain always just below the surface. Free of

the constraints of European society, he is always threatening to reemerge and hijack this Whig version of imperial modernity. In the chapters that follow, these oppositions will continue and will become increasingly important as an idea of progressive imperialism begins to take hold of the British national consciousness. Moving forward approximately thirty years, my next chapter turns to Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749) and Tobias Smollett's early *Roderick Random* (1748), where we will see attempts to sublimate the agency and authoritative connotations of an older patriarchy more fully within the new economic and social paradigms of empire by means of the figure of the beneficent Whig squire.

CHAPTER 2

THE NEW LAIRD RANDOM: PERFORMATIVITY, MASCULINE PEDAGOGY, AND EMPIRE IN SMOLLETT'S FIRST NOVEL

I was in the coffeehouse with Smollett when the news of the battle of Culloden arrived, and when London all over was in a perfect uproar of joy....The mob were so riotous, and the squibs so numerous and incessant that we were glad to go into a narrow entry to put our wigs in our pockets, and to take our swords from our belts and walk with them in our hands, as everybody then wore swords; and, after cautioning me against speaking a word, lest the mob should discover my country and become insolent, “for John Bull,” says he, “is as haughty and valiant to-night as he was abject and cowardly on the Black Wednesday when the Highlanders were at Derby.”

— The Rev. Dr. Alexander Carlyle¹

The first question he put to me was, ‘Where was you born?’ To which I answered, In Scotland. – ‘In Scotland (said he) I know that very well – we have scarce any other countrymen to examine here – you Scotchmen have overspread us of late as the locusts did Egypt....’

— Smollett, *The Adventures of Roderick Random*²

It seems as though most scholars of Tobias Smollett are, at some point, tempted to commit what the New Critics termed “the biographical fallacy” in discussing Smollett’s first

¹ Carlyle, *Autobiography of the Rev. Dr Alexander Carlyle, Minister of Inveresk*, 2nd Ed., (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1860), 124.

² Tobias Smollett, *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, ed. Paul-Gabriel Boucé (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 86. References are to this edition.

novel, *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748). Smollett himself was loathe for readers in his own age to take his picaresque narrative as autobiographical, pledging to his good friend and fellow Scot, Alexander Carlyle, that “the whole is not so much a representation of my life as that of many other needy Scotch surgeons whom I have known either personally or by report.”³ The reasons for his wariness on this point are easy to grasp: “Some persons, to whom I have been extremely obliged, being weak enough to take umbrage at many passages in the work on the supposition that I myself am the hero of the book, and they of consequence concerned in the history.”⁴ Indeed, Smollett’s famously splenetic (and frequently scatological) invective is on full display in this early work, which if anything is even less temperate in its railings than his more widely read later fiction. He was thus concerned the targets of its bitter satire not recognize themselves too closely (or at least that he be able to maintain a degree of plausible deniability if they did). Nevertheless, the proximity of the events of Smollett’s early adulthood and that of his disaffected and repeatedly disappointed protagonist, Rory Random, remains alluring: both scions of aristocratic Scottish families forced to make their own way in the imperial metropole; both subjected to at times vicious anti-Scots prejudice; both experiencing first-hand the brutalities of the Royal Navy and colonial war.

Of course, the question of whether and to what degree Rory is an avatar of his creator is of limited interest to most modern critics, myself included. But I want to raise the historical figure of Tobias Smollett – more specifically, of Tobias Smollett in London in the 1740s – for two main reasons. The first is that Smollett, a son of “the Celtic fringe,” so nicely frames the

³ Smollett, *The Letters of Tobias Smollett, M.D.*, ed. Edwards S. Noyes, Ph.D. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926), 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*

figure of the new man that is central to the period's transforming concept of British masculinity.⁵ Although Smollett's grandfather had been knighted by William III (Smollett's immediate family were all Presbyterians and certainly not Jacobites), Smollett was, in the words of his recent biographer, Jeremy Lewis, "the youngest son of a youngest son."⁶ There was no lairdship awaiting him on his grandfather's death; his best chance of success, the young Tobias must have believed, was to join the throngs of other Scots headed south to force their way into the professional classes emerging in post-Union London.⁷ Yet much like his creation, Rory Random, Smollett found London and its empire to be a hostile – and often frighteningly savage – sphere for an outsider. The 1740s in particular, especially after Bonnie Prince Charlie's final defeat at Culloden on 16 April 1746, were a bad time to be a North Briton in the capital, as Carlyle's report attests. Never mind that most Scots outside of the Catholic Highlands had remained loyal to the government – indeed, many of them feared the return of the Stuarts even more strongly than did their English neighbors.⁸ The '45 and its crushing defeat only served to

⁵ For the origins of this term, and for a thorough account of the fraught history between England and the Celtic regions of the British Isles, see Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999).

⁶ Lewis, *Tobias Smollett* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2003), 14. For another excellent account of Smollett's life, see Lewis Knapp's 1949 biography, which remains a standard text for Smollett scholars. Knapp, *Tobias Smollett, Doctor of Men and Letters* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949).

⁷ See Linda Colley on Scottish participation in the project of empire. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 76-85, 120-132. Indeed, Colley notes that the empire served the purposes of constructing a new "British" identity out of disparate, older English, Scottish, Irish, and Welsh identities largely by virtue of being open to Britons from the peripheries of the kingdom: "If Britain's primary identity was to be an imperial one, then the English were put firmly and forever in their place, reduced to a component part of a much greater whole, exactly like the Scots, and no longer the people who ran virtually the whole show. A British imperium, in other words, enabled Scots to feel themselves peers of the English in a way still denied them in an island kingdom" (Ibid., 130).

⁸ Colley provides a helpful summary of the '45, the limited extent of support for Jacobitism, and the increase in anti-Scottish sentiments that followed in its wake. Ibid., 76-85. Recent accounts have somewhat nuanced this canonical view, pointing toward a larger and more diverse support

inflame a host of historic prejudices and animosities in England, which Smollett encountered as a young man and with which his first novel's protagonist must contend.⁹

This chapter takes up two separate but intersecting themes within *Roderick Random*, nationality and masculinity, in order to unpack Smollett's complex and often conflicted exploration of the empire and its new men. Specifically, I argue the novel treats both ideas as interrelated performances, and further, that it suggests this emergent performativity is conditioned by modernity itself. Under the old, aristocratic paradigm (represented by Rory's tyrannical grandfather), a gentleman's social position was legible to all. It depended first-and-foremost upon consanguinity, and its pledge was the manorial estate, recognized and respected by all in its environs – a fact which counted for far more in a world where the gentleman's sphere of action was local and circumscribed. But Smollett suggests that these traditional signifiers have lost much of their meaning as that sphere has become (of necessity) imperial. For the Scot to thrive amongst a sea of strangers, or on shores hundreds or thousands of miles from his Lowland home, he must instead learn to flawlessly copy the language, manners, dress, and feelings of the cosmopolitan, emphatically British state he would support.¹⁰ Judith Butler has

for the Stuarts in the eighteenth century and beyond. See, for instance, Allan I. Macinnes et al., eds., *Living with Jacobitism, 1690-1788* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

⁹ Indeed, Leith Davis persuasively argues that Charles Edward's rising and the tensions it produced or exacerbated run throughout *RR*, even though most of the novel's key events predate the rebellion. Davis, *Acts of Union: Scotland and the Literary Negotiation of the British Nation, 1707-1830* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 46-73.

¹⁰ John Barrell has recognized the distinctly pedagogical nature of *Random*'s journey to manhood, arguing that it is through education that *Random* acquires the capacity to impose a regime of order and coherence on his bizarre peregrinations. In the eighteenth-century novel, Barrell writes, such a regime meant avoiding particularization and instead viewing the world as a whole – the quintessential capability of the gentleman, whose status affords him a bird's-eye view of society not available to the laboring classes, which must focus on exigencies and subsistence. Barrell, *English Literature in History: An Equal Wide Survey* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1983), 176-209. Meanwhile, Deidre Lynch, whose work draws upon Barrell, contends that that under *RR*'s account of gentlemanliness, Rory must learn to perform a kind of blank

described gender as a fluid and always inchoate construct, constituted in the repetition (or lack thereof) of manifold, socially-recognized signs.¹¹ But while for Butler, recognizing this instability has the potential to liberate the subject from oppressive taxonomies, *Roderick Random* is deeply ambivalent as to what this performativity (which the novel presents as a newly emerging feature of modernity) means for the individual and for the broader society. On the one hand, it frees the ambitious young Scot from the strictures of nation and class, allowing him the capacity to redefine himself through participation in the empire. On the other hand, the novel is haunted by the fear that performative masculinity may prove misleading or hollow – that a veneer of gentility belies the brutality inherent in imperial manhood, or worse, that instead of registering a new form of action it represents the death of agency entirely.

The novel's greatest source of tension comes from the fact that these anxieties sit alongside a conviction that the premodern, aristocratic patriarchalism which modern, performative identity replaces is also deeply flawed. After all, the novel commences with a critique of the old order, and we are made to feel the injustice of absolutist patriarchalism throughout. Rory's grandfather had cruelly disinherited Rory's father for marrying against his wishes, casting Random adrift in the world.¹² And Smollett's novel posits imperial

typicality that cannot be easily taxonomized. This is complicated by his Celtic hair, complexion, and accent, which mark him as aberrant in the eyes of metropolitan society. See Lynch, *The Economy of Character*, 102-112 especially. While I am indebted to both accounts, I argue that masculinity in *RR* remains stubbornly in a state of disruption to a much greater degree than Barrell or Lynch allow.

¹¹ "Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts* [emphasis original]." Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 191.

¹² The Random patriarch pronounces his doom thusly: "Your brothers and sisters, said my grandfather, did not think it beneath them to consult me in an affair of such importance as matrimony; neither (I suppose) would you have omitted that piece of duty, had you not some secret fund in reserve, to the comforts of which I leave you, with a desire that you will this night,

gentlemanliness as a salve for these injuries. Indeed, as Smollett well knew, the possibilities afforded by union and the newly British (as opposed to exclusively English) empire to young men from the periphery offered the profoundly alluring opportunity of radically rethinking and reformulating the self. It was not merely that the old paradigm of consanguinity and patriarchalist absolutism was becoming untenable amidst the enormous influx of capital from Britain's growing colonies abroad. That was a change from which second sons of the aristocracy and young men from the middle and (to a much lesser extent) lower classes throughout the kingdoms potentially stood to benefit. For Scotsmen, Welshmen, and Irishmen, participation in the projects of empire offered the promise of a more striking transformation. The overseas colonies presented an avenue toward a seat at the heart of power itself, a chance at swapping a marginalized provinciality – a Celtic otherness – for political agency in the massive imperial theater.¹³

However, *Roderick Random* is not fully able to discard the logic of the old patriarchalism, nor is it at all convinced that the new gentlemanliness unproblematically represents the benevolent, Whiggish virtue to which it pretends. Despite metropolitan rituals of civility and refinement, Random finds a society in London every bit as venal as the patriarch of his own family, and even more violent – a metropole that builds its imperial power with the

seek out another habitation for yourself and wife....Sir, you have made the grand tour – you are a polite gentleman – a very pretty gentleman – I wish you a great deal of joy, and am your very humble servant. So saying, he left my father in a situation easily imagined” (*RR* 2).

¹³ When Michael Hechter wrote *Internal Colonialism* in the 1970s, the idea that parts of the United Kingdom were, in fact, colonies was highly controversial, at least in England. Although his view is much more widely shared today – certainly within the academy – it is still a point of contention within England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. There may be a parliament at Stormont, but the Orange Order still marches on 12 July. While Scotland rejected independence in September 2014, the outcome was very much in doubt in the weeks leading up to the plebiscite. Hechter's preface to the 1999 reprinting of *Internal Colonialism* (an edition put out just as devolution was beginning) provides a thoughtful reflection on how the work's reception had changed over two decades. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, xiii-xxiii.

blood of young Celtic men. Ostensibly, Random is able to triumph despite the many challenges imperial society presents to a Scot, returning home at the novel's end to his ancestral estate, married and wealthy, and with his long-lost father, who also grew rich through colonial adventure, in tow. Rory's impulsive tendencies have been reformed and softened through interactions with a virtuous woman – a familiar feature of mature masculinity in British eighteenth-century literature. Yet, as critics have long noticed, the novel's ending feels unsettlingly forced.¹⁴ If Rory's goal for several hundred pages has been to convincingly embody British gentlemanliness and thus to win acceptance within metropolitan society, his Scottish homecoming reads as a kind of defeat. For its bulk, Smollett's novel has been about a new kind of manhood, in which the telos of masculine development is attained through the performance of one's merit, or through learning to demonstrate a kind of discipline that seems very close to Robinson Crusoe's Protestant-capitalist ethos. What, then, are we to make of the reiteration of the squire (or rather, Scottish laird) as the happy and deserved ending of the young Scotsman's journey?¹⁵

As I will argue in my following chapters, the fantasy of an idyllic squirearchy attempts to impose some coherence on the often-chaotic set of ideas that compose eighteenth-century

¹⁴ Evan Gottlieb, for instance, notes the conspicuous hyper-conventionality of the ending in addition to subtleties that unsettle the return to traditional, Scottish lairdship, such as Rory continuing to call his rather "Don Rodriguez." This, Gottlieb writes, "emphasizes the extent to which his father's 'commerce' with the Spanish has permanently rendered him too foreign to be reassimilated into Scottishness, much less Britishness." Gottlieb, *Feeling British: Sympathy and National Identity in Scottish and English Writing, 1707-1832* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007), 71.

¹⁵ I am in agreement with Jerry C. Beasley, who takes the suddenness of this ending (Random goes from incarceration at Marshalsea prison to rediscovering his father in Argentina and his triumphal homecoming in just a few chapters) as very much part of Smollett's satiric strategy. See Beasley, *Tobias Smollett: Novelist* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1998), 73-74. The self-consciously contrived nature of *RR*'s ending helps bring into full relief the corruption and brutality of the imperial world Smollett savages. My final section takes up this problematic ending through the lens of masculine pedagogy and performance.

manliness. And that coherence appears especially attractive for a writer like Smollett, whose novels are prepossessed by fears of social upheaval and disorder. But as we are made acutely aware of the deficiencies of this symbol of masculine tradition – and of his incongruity with the modern – the retreat to lairdship itself becomes conspicuous as a nostalgic and shallow performance of an iconic identity that throws into question the substance of this identity. The fear which I argued lies at the heart of *Robinson Crusoe* – of the most despotic tendencies of absolutist patriarchy short-circuiting a more benevolent, Whig masculinity – is present in Smollett’s novel, too, seen in Random’s often casual cruelty and in the solipsism which appears to motivate his actions throughout much of the novel. And, indeed, far from acting to quash these impulses, to guide the young gentleman toward a more refined or softened British masculine identity, it is the world of imperial Britain that seems to exacerbate and reward these tendencies and drives.

In order to frame these concerns in their broadest strokes and to help elaborate the concepts with which Smollett engages, I will soon turn to Henry Fielding’s contemporaneous *Tom Jones* (1749) to assess these themes in a definitively English context.¹⁶ For in Fielding’s magnum opus, too, the protagonist’s journey to proper, Whig gentlemanliness – and the gentler, reformed patriarchalism this state represents – is cast as a matter of pedagogy and performance. To deserve his final state as Squire Allworthy’s legitimated heir, Tom will learn virtue, moderation, and self-governance that will fit him for the privileged sociopolitical position with which he is entrusted. At the same time, Fielding consistently unsettles the signification of

¹⁶ Smollett (with typical bitterness) suggested that Fielding had cribbed aspects of *RR* in drafting *Tom Jones*. See Linda Bree, “Fielding and Smollett: Rival Novelists?,” in *Tobias Smollett, Scotland’s First Novelist: New Essays in Memory of Paul-Gabriel Boucé*, ed. O. M. Brack, Jr. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), 142-163 on the rather one-sided rivalry between the two writers.

supposedly beneficent squirearchy, suggesting Tom's education (and his once-and-future benefactor's carefully maintained reputation) is its own kind of performance that masks the ominous potentials of Tom's own happy ending. By investigating the instabilities encoded within the prototypical novel of eighteenth-century gentlemanliness, we are better able to trace how Smollett works through these concerns at the kingdom's peripheries. Together, the two novels help us to uncover anxieties inherent in imperial masculinity that lie just beneath their comic surfaces. It is the opposition between the icon of the virtuous, benevolent country gentleman (the English squire or the Scottish laird) who is the result of a youthful masculine education and what Fielding and Smollett understand to be the actual lessons of this pedagogy that give these novels their satiric bite.

Squire Allworthy, Squire Western, and Squire Jones

Implicit in *Roderick Random* is the subsidence and insufficiency of one concept of masculine identity (that reliant upon consanguinity) and the emergence of a new gentlemanliness (that reliant upon social performance, industry, and capital) within the concept of the country squire himself. *Tom Jones* explores this very transformation, although, as I argue, Fielding's English context produces a few important differences in how this transformation is understood within the novel. It is not that the skepticism of Smollett's narrative as to the meaning of the new avenues to agency for young men from the periphery (here a periphery of class and legitimacy, not ethnicity) is absent in the making of Squire Jones. It is, rather, that for Smollett, imperial society ultimately appears so corrupted and corrupting that it threatens to collapse the moral pedagogy the young hero is supposedly undergoing even as it teaches him how to convincingly act the part of the modern gentleman. Random's lairdship at the novel's

conclusion is not only a reward for challenges met and sufferings borne, but it is also a conspicuous abandonment of the imperial social/political order that lairdship should offer agency within – an exchange of the imperial for the local, of the British for the Scottish. Fielding’s critique stops short of this point of despondency. In *Tom Jones*, the incapacities and corruptions of the existing social system are juxtaposed with a comic exploration of the world as it might be.¹⁷

For a novel that is just as concerned with the injustice of an old patriarch as *Roderick Random* is, it is perhaps unsurprising that the ’45 figures centrally in *Tom Jones*, and in a much more direct fashion than in Smollett’s novel. In Smollett, the hysteria occasioned by the rising is recalled through the anti-Scots prejudice Random encounters, although Bonnie Prince Charlie is referenced only fleetingly and the vast bulk of the novel’s action takes place a few years before this event. Meanwhile, Jones’s banishment from the Allworthy household and the period of his exile coincide with the rebellion, and for a time Jones considers taking up arms for the Hanoverian cause. Indeed, Leith Davis convincingly argues that *Tom Jones* is in many ways a novel about the rising itself. Fielding, she writes, uses the event to acknowledge cultural and political differences within the United Kingdom while working to assuage those differences by reimagining “the nation as a community of readers and to demonstrate the proper relationship

¹⁷ Thus, I am in partial agreement with Michael McKeon as to how Fielding’s comedies are structured, although McKeon’s contention that Fielding ultimately privileges “aesthetic pleasure” over social critique seems overstated for satiric works that are often so scathing. Focusing on *Joseph Andrews* as his main object of inquiry but extending his arguments to Fielding’s entire novelistic corpus, McKeon writes, “The ease with which formal argument comprehends the substantive social problem... by treating it as an exemplary case, prefigures the increasing facility with which Fielding’s charitable narrator will tacitly compensate for the failure of social – and providential – mechanisms to justify our provisional credence, by mobilizing narrative’s own more perfect versions of them.... Fielding meets Richardson at the nexus where moral and social pedagogy hesitate on the edge of their transformation into something else entirely, aesthetic pleasure” (McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel*, 408).

between the individual and the nation.”¹⁸ Jacobitism was particularly nefarious as a political discourse in Fielding’s view because of the hypocrisy perceived in how adherents presented their ideological concerns (e.g. invoking an ideology of “freedom” while supporting absolutism, or disavowing ties to Catholicism despite a widespread Protestant view that the 1688 revolution had everything to do with religion). *Tom Jones* is a novel focused on how to correctly read people and the motives that underlie their performative exteriors. After all, the novel’s key moment of crisis – Allworthy’s banishment of Jones because Allworthy has been misled as to the nature of Jones’s actions – is a moment of misinterpretation, and Davis argues that political crisis of the ’45 allows Fielding to extend these concerns into the political sphere.¹⁹

While much of the novel is set during the rising, however, Jacobitism is largely presented as on the verge of obsolescence as a serious mode of political thought. Its adherents are either superstitiously foolish characters of inferior rank (e.g. Partridge) or upper-class characters like Squire Western who are represented as politically neutered relics. Western’s professed Jacobitism is an early indicator of his misogynistic, patriarchalist attempts at tyranny within his squirearchical hall, but it also foreshadows his final defeat. Fielding’s 1749 readers were well aware that Charles Edward Stuart posed no real threat to the settled Whig order, but they also knew that the rabidly classist Western (a major obstacle to the eponymous hero’s union with his daughter, Sophia) would ultimately suffer defeat in this comi-epic. Moreover, Fielding goes to great lengths to type his Jacobite squire as ineffectual if not irrelevant. His opinions on women,

¹⁸ Davis, *Acts of Union*, 57.

¹⁹ Davis resists allegorizing the Allworthy-Jones relationship as part of her argument: “Rather than see the novel as a direct analogy to the events of the Rebellion, however, I want to read it as a more general attempt to create a homogeneous readership in the nation” (Ibid., 56). However, I argue that the invocation of Jacobitism/Whiggism helps Fielding stage a dialectic of competing modes of masculine behavior, with the emphatically Jacobitical Squire Western representing the despotism of the old patriarchy of bloodline and Squire Allworthy reifying the virtue/feeling discourse of Whig thought.

on his family honor, or on the House of Hanover are depicted as boorish and offensive, but they are never allowed to strike us as altogether very dangerous to the novel's comic ending. His sister's "Hanoverian linguo" may send him into paroxysms of rage, but we can be sure that the Squire will cool into his resting state of uncouth affability as soon as another country gentleman arrives with a bottle or proposes a hunt.²⁰

Thus, as Davis and others have noted, Jacobitical ideology helps Fielding to demarcate Western as an improper, tyrannical model of masculine authority of the old order, but it also operates along with Western's myriad comic traits to defuse the threat posed by this increasingly archaic system of belief. We can see this effect most clearly in Western's screeds upon Sophia's temerity to refuse to take the husband (the odious Blifil) whom he had chosen for her. Western's first instinct is that of the villain of romance – imprisoning his daughter – but this frighteningly despotic act soon devolves into absurdity. His sister (though not a Jacobite certainly no less of an adherent to the prejudices of class than her brother) quickly cows him into releasing Sophia, and in his frustration, Western produces a barely coherent rant upon Whiggism:

Patience! an you come to that, sister, I have more occasion of my patience, to be used like an overgrown schoolboy as I am by you. Do you think no one hath any understanding, unless he hath been about at court? Pox! the world is come to a fine pass, indeed, if we are all fools, except a parcel of roundheads and Hanover rats. Pox! I hope the times are a-coming that we shall make fools of them, and every man shall enjoy his own. That's all, sister; and every man shall enjoy his own. I hope to *zee* it, sister, before the Hanover rats have eat up all our corn, and left us nothing but turneps to feed upon. (*TJ* 280)

²⁰ Fielding, *Tom Jones*, eds. John Bender and Simon Stern (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 707. References are to this edition.

Fielding's satire here points in two directions. The would-be patriarchal tyrant vehemently denouncing "Hanover rats" serves as a send up of an ideology that, for Whigs, is at heart an ideology of absolutism. But it also marks Western as something of an anachronism, a patriarch not suited to the times in which he lives. His venting of spleen reads a script for how a tyrant should sound but without the power or will to support concrete action. And so he grudgingly grants his sister management of the (unsuccessful) project of bringing Sophia around to their wishes and sulks off in defeat – a series of events repeated several times throughout the course of the novel.

The ineffectuality (to say nothing of the backwardness) of this model of upper-class masculinity is the subject of pointed satire throughout *Tom Jones*, a satire accomplished largely through Western's reverberations between choleric rantings and good-natured, pseudo-Falstaffian cheer. At the very moment in which Western could actually do something about his Jacobitical views, for example, he instead remains happily ensconced in his countryseat, with his support of the Stuarts serving largely as an indicator of general malcontentedness with the world outside his estate. He names his horse "the Chevalier," a potential symbol of Charles Edward's martial heroism except for the fact that the only action the Chevalier sees is that of bearing the gouty squire on his fox hunts. And, if his loud Jacobitism symbolizes his pretensions to patriarchalist tyranny, the unsettling implications of this form of masculine authority are perpetually undercut by the frivolity of his favorite pursuits. At one point, Western has narrowly missed capturing Sophia on the road after she flees Western's hall fearing she will be forced to marry against her wishes. Western is dejected at his bad luck, and Fielding's readers delighted, but he soon loses all interest in tracking his daughter, as he encounters a hunting party. This temptation is too much for the squire, and he ends the day in drunkenness and conviviality:

The conversation was entertaining enough, and what we may perhaps relate in an appendix, or on some other occasion; but as it nowise concerns this history, we cannot prevail on ourselves to give it a place here. It concluded with a second chase, and that with an invitation to dinner. This, being accepted, was followed by a hearty bout of drinking, which ended in as hearty a nap on the part of Squire Western. (*TJ* 544)

We simply cannot take Western all that seriously as a threat to Jones and Sophia's future happiness, and the premodern form of masculinity Western registers ultimately serves as one of the novel's comic types.

Or does it? Studies that focus on Fielding's "system" or his formal innovations tend to suppress the importance of disruptions to the comic plot that his omniscient narrator sketches with such command.²¹ For one thing, while the feebleness of the threat Western represents to the novel's central romantic pairing is quite transparent, and while his political authority and efficacy in the novel's largest social scope is clearly circumscribed, in the local world of his Somersetshire estate, the old patriarch remains a considerable force. As wealthy landowners, Western and his benevolent foil, Allworthy, anchor the Whig understanding of the political state, both having stood for Parliament (Western, of course, for the country interest) and both serving

²¹ This tendency goes all the way back to Ian Watt's account of Fielding in *The Rise of the Novel*. For Watt, Fielding did not strive for the same inner depth in his characterizations that Richardson did precisely because he sought to depict humanity and human affairs in the broadest possible strokes. "The contrast between Fielding and Richardson as moralists is heightened by the effects of their very different narrative points of view. Richardson focuses attention on the individual, and whatever virtue or vice he is dealing with will loom very large, and have all its implications reflected in the action: Fielding, on the other hand, deals with too many characters and too complicated a plot to give the single individual virtue or vice quite this importance" (Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 282-283). There is a great deal of truth in this reading, but it does suggest that narrative cohesion negates the ambivalences Fielding creates or voices. And it is precisely these ambivalences that give meaning to Fielding's political and social satire.

as justices of the peace (the base level of the eighteenth-century English legal system).²² On the whole, Fielding's Whiggish novel appears to endorse this political construction, taking pains over its eighteen books to prove Jones's virtuous inclinations and capacity for right-feeling. When he is reinstated as Allworthy's heir at the novel's end, we are left with little doubt that the future Squire Jones will discharge these duties admirably – that he has become a figure of masculine authority not of capricious Stuart absolutism but of Whig-Harringtonian civic engagement. However, along the way to this comic ending, Fielding gives his readers several occasions to remember that the settled Hanoverian-Whig order does not necessitate these qualities in its patriarchs, and that the new order itself was not altogether that benevolent.

We are reminded, for instance, of the draconian measures that country squires had at their disposal to defend their property rights against incursion by the non-propertied classes, which often had historic claims of their own to the usage of squirearchical manors. In *Joseph Andrews* (1742), Fielding had pointedly criticized the Black Act of 1723, a law that made dozens of crimes against property capital offenses.²³ When we first encounter Squire Western, Fielding similarly casts him as a near-tyrannical overseer of his lands and game:

²² Frank O'Gorman describes the gentry's domination of this level of the judiciary, arguing that it made the upper tier of commons "partners in oligarchy" with the eighteenth-century peerage and Court. O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century*, 136.

Fielding references Western as a "country" candidate at 236. The term "Country Party" had shifting associations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Originally, it signified Harringtonian-Whig opposition to the "Court interests" under Charles II, and then opposition to William III's demands for a large, standing Army. However, after the accession of George I in 1714, "Country" was often used to allude to the Tory (occasionally Jacobite) gentry. J. G. A. Pocock thoroughly explores Country and Court ideology in Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 401-461 especially.

²³ Joseph and Fanny stand accused of cutting a twig from land belonging to Lawyer Scout. "'Jesu!' said the Squire, 'would you commit two Persons to *Bridewell* for a Twig?' 'Yes.' Said the Lawyer, 'and with great Lenity too; for if we had called it a young Tree they would have

Contiguous to Mr Allworthy's estate was the manor of one of those gentlemen who are called *preservers of the game*. This species of men, from the great severity with which they revenge the death of a hare or partridge, might be thought to cultivate the same superstition with the Banians of India, many of whom, we are told, dedicate their whole lives to the preservation and protection of certain animals; was it not that our English Banians, while they preserve them from other enemies, will most unmercifully slaughter whole horse-loads themselves; so that they stand clearly acquitted of any such heathenish superstition. (*TJ* 104)

John Bender and Simon Stern take "Banian" here to reference the specific Hindu caste, which comprised merchants and traders. Fielding's usage of the term appears less specific, reading as a general orientalizing of the squire, but it works to link Western's performance of gentlemanly prerogative with tyrannical impulses depicted as opposing English sympathy and benevolence.²⁴ Indeed, eighteenth-century writers frequently turned to the trope of the Oriental despot in contrast with European enlightenment or a British concept of rights.²⁵ Furthermore, to Fielding's Whig readers, the foreignness implied here as a corollary to Western's despotic patriarchy nicely

been both hanged." Fielding, *Joseph Andrews and Shamela*, eds. Douglas Brooks-Davies and Martin C. Battestin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 252-253.

E.P. Thompson argues that the anti-poaching Black Act represented a substantial assault on the historic rights of lower commons, as newly wealthy Whig landowners (many of whom had made their fortunes in the rapidly growing commercial-imperial spheres of Georgian Britain) sought to forcefully assert their property rights. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters*.

²⁴ Bender and Stern, explanatory notes to *Tom Jones*, by Henry Fielding (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 879.

²⁵ In addition to Edward Said, Alain Grosrichard's 1979 monograph, *The Sultan's Court*, is immensely useful in unpacking the history of this idea of the autocratic Orient. Published contemporaneously with *Orientalism*, Grosrichard's account skews earlier than Said's, which is mainly concerned with late-eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century ideologies. Grosrichard, *The Sultan's Court: European Fantasies of the East* (New York: Verso, 1998). Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

sets up his Jacobitical sympathies. The absolutist Stuarts had long been cast by their opponents as anti-British – rulers in the mode of the continental royal houses, unfit to command a realm built upon a constitution. Yet as Fielding reminds us here, Western is still very much in charge within the confines of his estate and local jurisdiction. If Jacobitism becomes a symbol over the course of the novel for a dead or anti-modern understanding of upper-class, masculine authority and patriarchalism, at the level of the Somerset estate, it has much more ominous, active implications. There, the squire retains the potential for action, having the power of life or death over anyone unfortunate enough to shoot a partridge on his land.²⁶

²⁶ The misanthropic Man of the Hill explicitly voices this idea of support for the Stuarts as emphatically un-British in his long diatribe against “Popery.” Living in isolation for decades, the hermit is unaware of Charles Edward’s uprising until Jones informs him of it. The Man of the Hill reacts in disbelief: “There may be some hot-headed Papists led by their priests to engage in this desperate cause, and think it a holy war; but that Protestants, that members of the *Church of England*, should be apostates... I cannot believe it” (*TJ* 414, emphasis mine).

Of course, this ultra-nationalistic rhetoric cut both ways, with Tories and Jacobites accusing Whigs of having handed the kingdom over to foreigners and foreign interests, first to the Dutch William III and later to the German George I. This othering of political opponents by both parties can be seen in comparing the standard and Jacobite variants of that famous, jingoistic anthem, “Rule! Britannia.” For instance, James Thomson’s second verse depicts despotism as a distinctly foreign problem:

The nations not so blest as thee,
Must, in their turns, to tyrants fall;
While thou shalt flourish great and free,
The dread and envy of them all.

Meanwhile, the Jacobite version of the anthem casts Charles Edward’s landing as the return of the native son:

Britannia, rouse at Heaven’s command!
And crown thy native prince again...
.....
Then thou shalt be – Britannia, thou shalt be
From home and foreign tyrant free.

This reverberation between hollow reenactment of the forms of an obsolete modality and the occasionally deadly serious implication of the squire's real, politico-juridical power and agency constitutes a critique of the old patriarchalism much more sustained and thoroughgoing than the critique present in Smollett's re-envisioning of masculine development. *Roderick Random* conveys the unfairness of Rory's grandfather's despotic control over the lives and fortunes of his children, but Rory's self-account manifests this feeling largely as personal bitterness. The loss of a consanguineous, absolutist foundation of masculine authority is the first of a series of alienations that eventually lead Rory to seek out a new model of reformulating this authority, which he does through imperial venture and learned performance of social codes. That he ends the novel as a benevolent patriarch "devoured by [his tenants'] affection" (RR 434) would seem to represent a local, not a global, revision of lairdship in this particular Scottish community. In fact, despite commencing with an illustration of the cruelty possible in such an absolutist system of agency and power, patriarchalism is retained in all its reactionary import as a salve for the traumas the hero has experienced in British-imperial modernity. Smollett is concerned with the limitations that modernity places on the young man of the periphery who is forced to work within its rules, and his novel finally defaults to a premodern fantasy of insularity in a bid to reopen a sphere for action and control. Fielding, whose protagonist is unencumbered by the constraints of ethnic otherness, instead attempts to rethink and reform (in narrative at least) the foundations of English masculine agency itself, retaining the symbol of that agency (the country patriarch) while rejecting outright its older logics.

Western's anti-Hanoverian xenophobia registers the Tory/Jacobite obverse of this longstanding political strategy. (William Chappell, *Old English Popular Music*, vol. II (London: Chappell & Co., 1893), 689, 687).

For it is not only the outlandishly, comically retrograde Western whose performance of masculine authority comes under scrutiny in *Tom Jones*. I have suggested that Allworthy and Western represent two poles of upper-class, rural manliness – the modern squire basing his authority in legality, adherence to virtue, and sympathetic capacity against the old, despotic patriarch seeking to base his authority in consanguinity, rank, and family honor. At points, however, Allworthy himself appears very close to Western’s autocratic model. Unlike his Jacobite neighbor, Allworthy approaches his squirearchical duties with an eye towards fairness and justice (rather than self-interest or preservation of social position), and yet, entrusted with substantial powers and positioned relatively far from any higher central authority, Allworthy occasionally behaves as quite the absolutist. We see this early in the novel’s first book, in which the good squire questions Jenny Jones, the supposed mother of Fielding’s hero, on the parentage of the newly discovered bastard foundling. Speaking with a sort of kind condescension, Allworthy nevertheless takes pains to remind Jenny of his power over her: “You know, child, it is in my power, as a magistrate, to punish you very rigorously for what you have done, and you will perhaps be the more apt to fear I should execute that power, because you have, in a manner, laid your sins at my door” (*TJ* 44). Allworthy of course does not commit Jenny to Bridewell, and his ensuing speech aims to establish his magnanimity. But it is notable that Fielding begins this characterization with a threat, and one that probably overreaches even the substantial powers Allworthy actually has.²⁷

The potentially despotic underpinnings of this kindhearted squire’s political and social authority – and how those underpinnings conflict with the modern squire’s benevolent self-representation – are emphasized in a similar scene several books later. In this case, Allworthy

²⁷ Bender and Simon note that two justices were required to concur before committing an unwed mother to jail. Bender and Stern, explanatory notes to *Tom Jones*, 875.

has just ordered Molly Seagrim imprisoned for being with child and refusing to name the father (none other than Tom Jones). Fielding's narrator acknowledges this act was beyond the scope of Allworthy's judicial charge but begs we consider that his motives are good and that we excuse the overreach accordingly:

A lawyer may, perhaps, think Mr Allworthy exceeded his authority a little in this instance. And, to say the truth, I question, as here was no regular information before him, whether his conduct was strictly regular. However, as his intention was truly upright, he ought to be excused *in foro conscientiae*; since so many arbitrary acts are daily committed by magistrates who have not this excuse to plead for themselves. (*TJ* 165)

At a superficial level, the novel proposes that we might be able to accept this account of Allworthy, who we are told possesses "an agreeable person, a sound constitution, a solid understanding, and a benevolent heart" (*TJ* 31). His main concern in the cases of both Jenny Jones and Molly Seagrim appears to be finding the man who has abandoned the unfortunate young woman and to provide for the child. But the paragraph immediately preceding the plea "*in foro conscientiae*" complicates our ability to attribute Allworthy's actions entirely to such well-meaning concerns. Indeed, Fielding (an author whose writings are so frequently viewed as voicing an aristocratic sensibility when compared to his sometime antagonist, Richardson) uses the Molly Seagrim episode to mount a rather pointed class critique. Seagrim is being sent, Fielding writes, to "that house where the inferior sort of people may learn one good lesson, viz., respect and deference to their superiors" (*TJ* 165). Shifting the meaning of Allworthy's actions from an effort at enforcing a general morality into an effort to maintain class distinctions, Fielding continues even more sharply: "Since it must show them the wide distinction Fortune

intends between those persons who are to be corrected for their faults, and those who are not” (*TJ* 165). These brief passages are striking precisely because they work against the general movements of the novel. Throughout, we know full well that Fielding’s comedy is headed for resolution in a Whiggish ideal of legal order, virtuous beneficence, and rural fecundity, with a happy marriage for its hero and the kindly squire occupying its moral center. Yet along the way, *Tom Jones* flags the fictionality and idealism of this resolution, suggesting that the patriarchal authority commanded by Squire Allworthy might not be very different at all from that of his autocratic, Tory double.

The elevation of Jones to adopted son and heir is the appropriately comic ending for a work that describes itself “prosai-comi-epic” (*TJ* 181). But Fielding also goes to some lengths to remind us of this fact as he builds toward his happy ending. For instance, at the outset of two crucial chapters in which Allworthy begins to realize that Jones has been wronged, Fielding writes,

Here an accident happened of a very extraordinary kind; one indeed of those strange chances whence very good and grave men have concluded that Providence often interposes in the discovery of the most secret villainy, in order to caution men from quitting the paths of honesty. (*TJ* 814)

Of course, Fielding’s narrator concludes no such thing. The term “providence” occurs only ten times in this massive text, whereas the much more capricious “fortune” appears in more than one hundred locations. When a providential view of human events is invoked, it is often by the highly superstitious Partridge and once by the scheming Blifil in redoubling his attempts to

slander Jones.²⁸ That is not to say that the divine is absent in the worldview of *Tom Jones*, but rather that the text repeatedly reminds us that in the world outside its comedy, we cannot count on a happy, temporal ending as at all part of the divine plan. Martin C. Battestin's contention that "[a]s the general frame and architecture of *Tom Jones* is the emblem of Design in the macrocosm, so the narrative itself is the demonstration of Providence, the cause and agent of that Design" would negate much of the force of Fielding's social critique and overlook much of its point.²⁹ Fielding imagines the world as he would like it to be, but *Tom Jones* is also very much aware of the world as it is. Over its eighteen books, its hero learns to control his passions and follow the path of virtue, yielding a right-feeling and right-acting young man, a future Squire Jones whose exterior performance of manhood matches inner worth and whose authority registers first-and-foremost a good heart proved through toil rather than an absolute class position conferred by blood.³⁰ It also depicts this new vision of masculine authority as in a state of becoming, and whether this vision is fully realizable in the world remains an open question. *Tom Jones*'s ending is thus simultaneously hopeful that traditional forms of masculine agency can be revised to find purchase in a beneficent modernity and skeptical as to what that revision

²⁸ "'Oh, sir,' returned Blifil, 'it is not without secret direction of Providence that you mention the word adoption. Your adopted son, sir, that Jones, that wretch whom you nourished in your bosom, hath proved one of the greatest villains upon earth'" (*TJ* 774).

²⁹ Battestin, *The Providence of Wit: Aspects of Form in Augustan Literature and the Arts* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1989), 151. My reading is substantially more in line with that of Lennard J. Davis, who views Fielding's novelistic prose as an evolution of earlier eighteenth-century journalism and journalistic fiction. Fielding dispenses with the pretense of factuality that, for instance, Defoe or Behn had deployed, Davis argues, in order to construct an authorial command that allows a truer exploration of human nature – a much more humanistic version of Fielding's project. Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 193-211.

³⁰ Of course, it is also conferred by blood, via the discovery of Tom's true parentage – Allworthy's sister and a local parson (*TJ* 839-849). A narrative of proven virtue given added weight by the discovery of the bastard/foundling's consanguinity with the patriarch was a well-worn device by the century's end. For another famous example from a few decades later, see Frances Burney's *Evelina*, ed. Edward A. Bloom (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

might look like. Fielding goes a long way toward repairing his hero's alienation by teaching him how to successfully demonstrate the virtue he has possessed all along. But the fear of the gentleman's potentials for agency being reduced to surface performance – or worse, of the performance of benevolence obscuring arbitrary and tyrannical tendencies beneath – unsettles the novel's cheerful resolution.

Cudgels, swords, and lengths of lace: Looking – and acting – the gentleman in *Roderick Random*

Smollett's first novel is, on the whole, a bleaker, more sardonic affair than Fielding's masterpiece. In part, this reflects the two novelists' diverging styles – irascibility and cynicism are prominent features of Smollett's entire oeuvre, to such a degree that he has offended critical sensibilities for much of the last 250 years.³¹ But the darkness that pervades *Roderick Random* also registers the even more complex concerns facing its protagonist, whose successful execution of gentlemanly performance must also reckon with a national and ethnic otherness that throughout precludes Rory from the full acceptance of the society he courts. Indeed, questions of gender and questions of nationality are inextricable in Smollett's text, as Juliet Shields's account has shown. Arguing that the moral pedagogy of *Roderick Random* consists of its

³¹ It would perhaps be a stretch to attribute Smollett's lengthy status as a second-tier author to Laurence Sterne's dismissal of him as "the learned SMELFUNGUS" in his 1768 novel, *A Sentimental Journey*. See Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey*, ed. Paul Goring (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 50. But Sterne's opinion seems to have stuck. For Victorian critics and many scholars in the twentieth century, Smollett's fiction was simply too coarse, too mean-spirited, and too chaotic to warrant serious attention. Even John Richetti, while making a strong case for Smollett's inclusion in the origin story of the eighteenth-century novel, appears to feel the need to apologize for Smollett's failure to comport to the narratological command of a Fielding: "Smollett's real originality follows from this representational fullness and attention to intractable historical materials, and yet such originality also seems a deviation from the responsibilities that representation entails" (Richetti, *The English Novel in History, 1700-1780* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 170).

eponymous hero attaining a definitively British masculinity, Shields writes that Smollett's protagonist comes to manifest stereotypically English and Scottish values and characteristics in a kind of mutual counterbalance and alignment.³² But Smollett is also deeply skeptical as to the functionality of this developmental model, as well as to the actual content of the performative gentlemanliness it enables. Random professes to attain virtues such as restraint and moderation, but English/imperial society often appears to work against this understanding of refinement that it supposedly rewards. It is actually in his withdrawal from English society – in his return to a highly traditional concept of gentlemanliness in the figure of the Scottish laird – that Random appears to reach his pinnacle of mature masculinity, even as this homecoming presents as a kind of defeat.

Rather than taking the chronology of Random's masculine pedagogy linearly, I think it is helpful to start with a very specific (and rather belabored) set of symbols the novel deploys repeatedly, symbols that simultaneously reflect and undercut an idea of increasing refinement and gentility. Throughout *Roderick Random*, Smollett gives his readers several ways of indexing his hero's developmental progress and relative success or failure: whether, for instance, Random is currently admitted to the home of a peer or whether he is a winner or a loser at the gambling table. But perhaps the most persistent indicator of Rory's social standing at any given moment is

³² Shields argues that, in part, this process involves a moderation of masculine impulses: "Only when he falls in love with the beautiful, virtuous, and wealthy Narcissa Topeshall, an Englishwoman who teaches him to temper selfish aggression with compassion, and cunning ambition with sober industry, does Roderick learn to distinguish between interest and affection, and between economic and social commerce. Roderick's feminization entails his Anglicization: as he becomes an affluent trader and a loving husband, the proud Scot renounces his self-interest for the masculine independence proper to civilized, commercial English society." Shields, *Sentimental Literature and Anglo-Scottish Identity, 1745-1820* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 61. My own account is largely in agreement with Shields's reading, although I hold that the extent to which Roderick successfully completes this transformation – or the degree to which various masculine virtues hold up as English or Scottish – is an open question in the novel.

the weapon in his possession. Early in the narrative, Random and his friends strut through London streets armed with clubs – “my faithful cudgel” (*RR* 110) – a crude device that clearly evokes an imagery of barbarism. As soon as Rory manages to acquire any sum of money, however, procuring a sword (a symbol just as phallic but also, importantly, a ubiquitous part of the gentleman’s uniform) is among his foremost concerns. His obligation later in the narrative to “pawn my sword of steel inlaid with gold” is viewed by his trusty servant, Hugh Strap, as “wormwood and gall” (*RR* 315) because it represents the loss of a talisman conferring manliness and class position simultaneously. If we consider Shields’s reading, this progression from cudgel to sword, and this grief over losing the sword once it is acquired, makes perfect sense. The former is the rough instrument of a roving thug, the latter the refined tool and sartorial device of the polished gentleman. When Random has a rapier at his side, we are confident he is in ascendancy; without it, we know that he is approaching a nadir.

Yet there are scenes that place a great deal of pressure on our ability to view the society of the universalized, typologized British gentleman as at all removed from the world of the provincial, club-wielding Scot, or to view Random’s admission into this society as an indication of the hero’s relative moral progress. It is often, paradoxically, items that should connote gentility such as the sword or pistol that come to register this proximity, thus disrupting their own symbolic import. Let us consider two separate instances of dueling – that most infamous of eighteenth-century gentlemanly social protocols – which quickly descend from the hyper-stylized combat-ritual of honorable (and upper-class by implication) manhood to unregulated melee.³³ The first occurs during Random’s disastrous expedition to South America aboard HMS

³³ Dueling was the subject of intense debate throughout the eighteenth century, at once derided as a holdover (or ersatz mimicry) of past, barbarous ages and romanticized as the test of gentlemanly honor. See John Leigh’s new monograph on the history of literary duels. Leigh,

Thunder, during the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739-1748). Having just taken back his sword and pistols (he had been deprived of them while locked in irons due to the antipathy of his corrupt captain), he challenges Crampley, an officer and arch-nemesis who has taken command of the ship and begun to terrorize the crew:

As soon as I set foot on *terra firma*, my indignation, which had boiled so long within me, broke out against Crampley, whom I immediately challenged to single combat, presenting my pistols, that he might take his choice: He took one without hesitation, and before I could cock the other fired in my face throwing the pistol after the shot. – I felt myself stunned, and imaging the bullet had entered my brain, discharged mine as quick as possible, that I might not die unrevenged: then flying upon my antagonist, knocked out several his fore-teeth with the but-end of the piece. (RR 210)

Here, Random attempts to approach this conflict according to the rules of gentlemanly honor and decorum only to find himself reduced to brawling, the pistol that he had offered in chivalric custom to his antagonist only seconds before becoming a bludgeon in his hand. His opponent falls not in an heroic scene of romance but in a (typical Smollett) darkly humorous spray of gore. Moreover, it is the English gentleman who upsets the Scottish protagonist's instinctive sense of honor and order, as it very often is throughout the novel – a not-so-subtle jab at English stereotypes about their uncivilized northern neighbors. The novel's critique of emerging British

Touché: The Duel in Literature (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015). Donna Andrew provides a helpful account of the decline of the practice in the nineteenth century, which she attributes to class panic. The aristocracy, Andrew writes, finally abandoned dueling when it spread into the ranks of the growing *petit bourgeoisie*. Andrew, "The Code of Honour," 409-434.

gentlemanliness as show without substance here fractures the performative surface itself. The veneer of gentility placed upon the violence of the duel disappears with the first blow.

While Smollett's satire gestures toward a conceit of English civility as the structuring agent of an emergent British masculinity – a model that cancels out the despotic, violent, or overly passionate impulses of a conceit of Celtic masculinity – I argue that this conceit is always already in collapse throughout the novel. Indeed, Smollett simply offers no rhetorical or iterative space for this culturally chauvinistic idea to find purchase. Evan Gottlieb argues that scenes like the above generally happen outside of the British Isles – in imperial spaces beyond the scope of Smollett's nation-building sympathetic or sentimental project.³⁴ What Gottlieb classes as “foreign” violence repeatedly creeps into the United Kingdom itself to unsettle Random's pedagogical trajectory, and, indeed, it is foreign capital which for Gottlieb most troubles the novel's telos in lairdship, since this capital carries with it the brutality of its production.³⁵ But the corruption of proper masculinity Smollett depicts here is more insidious and pervasive than a Burkean fear of young men going astray in the empire when removed from the careful tutelage of their home society. Much as in *Robinson Crusoe*, brutality and despotism appear to irrupt from within an English masculine culture itself. Random's virtuous love for the paragonic Narcissa is set up as an index of his progress in restraining his violent passions, which Shields has described as Random's “feminization.”³⁶ But her claim that the novel equates this process to Random's “Anglicization” appears more problematic, even if we take that process of

³⁴ Gottlieb, *Feeling British*, 68.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 72.

³⁶ Shields, *Sentimental Literature*, 61.

Anglicization only as a superficial theme that is subsequently undermined and rendered ambivalent.³⁷

We can see Smollett's critique of emerging British-imperial gentlemanliness more clearly in how Rory's masculine pedagogy unfolds in the United Kingdom itself, for is it not only in foreign wars that his moral progress is threatened by confrontations that descend into Smolletian barbarity. Back in England, in a duel over Narcissa herself, we find an even more shocking offense against the rules of English, upper-class masculine conduct – a duel instigated by an Englishman. In South America, Random had turned his pistol into a club. In England, it is the hilt of his sword that becomes his cudgel:

I grappled with him, and being much the stronger, threw him upon the ground, where I wrested his sword out of his hand, and so great was my confusion, instead of turning the point upon him, struck out three of his fore-teeth with the hilt. — In the mean time, our servants seeing us fall, run up to separate and assist us.... I helped his footman to raise him, and having bound up his wound with my handkerchief, assured him it was not dangerous; I likewise restored his sword, and

³⁷ See also E. J. Clery's comprehensive account of eighteenth-century discourses on "feminization." Although many prominent cultural critics associated "effeminacy" with moral decay – and with proliferating imperial luxuries and the new credit economy (think of the numerous misogynistic characterizations of trade and credit as fickle women appearing in the aftermath of the South Seas Bubble) – Clery also traces a countering strain of eighteenth-century thought that held that "feminization" was coextensive with increasing civilization. Clery differentiates these two concepts lucidly: "... 'feminization' is reserved strictly for representations that approve or even advocate the acquisition of certain characteristics gendered 'feminine': sociability, civility, compassion, domesticity, and love of family, the dynamic exercise of the passions and, above all, refinement, the mark of modernity. The 'feminized' man is a model of politeness, shaped by his contact with the female sex, full of respect and admiration for moral women, and ably fitted to undertake his heterosexual duties. 'Effeminacy' or 'effeminization', on the other hand, is employed as a sum of a complex of derogatory ideas also gendered 'feminine', including corruption, weakness, cowardice, luxury, immorality and the unbridled play of passions" (Clery, *The Feminization Debate*, 9-10).

offered to support him to his own house. — He thanked me, with an air of sullen dignity; and whispering to me, that I should hear from him soon, went away, leaning on his servant's shoulder. (RR 365)

Smollett's prose waivers between romance and picaresque, ending with the bested gentleman taking his leave with politeness and honor – after having his teeth bashed out. We could interpret Rory's fighting style as a sign of his inchoate moral development, attributing it to a youthful over-eagerness or lack of confidence that has short-circuited his own self-command. Indeed, the other suitor is a peer, Lord Quiverwit, and Random admits that in receiving his challenge, "I never had less inclination to fight than at this time" (RR 364). However, Quiverwit's reaction makes this reading of the scene difficult to sustain, for neither he nor any of the attendants present appear all that troubled by the manner in which the duel was fought. By turning this ritualized combat between gentleman into a spectacle of chaos and smashed teeth, Smollett undercuts cultural conceptions of *English* manhood. Random has acquired the dress and emblems of the South British gentleman, but these often appear as gilding, masking darker drives and behaviors at the heart of English masculinity.

At the same time, Smollett depicts the methods of reproducing that gilding as a crucially important skillset for the young Scotsman to learn.³⁸ What matters for someone in Rory's position seeking his way in the imperial metropole (and what matters doubly or trebly for the

³⁸ Acute consciousness of performative identity is imbedded even in the dialect the older Rory chooses to render his self-account. See, for instance, Janet Sorenson, who notes the deliberateness with which Random's narration is rendered in standard English, despite the fact that we know his native tongue is broad Scots. Her chapter on Smollett nicely complicates the novelist's views on language and authority, describing how in later works, particularly *Humphry Clinker*, Smollett waivers between a strong association of command of standard English with good breeding, political agency, and, indeed, ideal masculinity and a view of the Celtic peripheries and their languages as providing an antidote to English corruption. Sorenson, *The Grammar of Empire in Eighteenth-Century British Writing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 104-137.

young man of the periphery) is how he is read by others. If he is to claim British-gentlemanly status, he must learn how to produce the appropriate signs and signifiers of that gender and rank. Or rather, he must learn the iterative structures of gentlemanliness – how to perform a typology that is legible and acceptable to the social sphere he seeks to inhabit. Furthermore, as I argue below, in performing this typology, gender, class, and nationality are all deeply imbricated. What it means to be a man, what it means to be an Englishman or a Scotsman, and what it means to be a gentleman are questions central to *Roderick Random*'s narrative arc and questions Smollett approaches throughout with ambivalence. According to Butler's view of performativity, the always inchoate production of gender can allow for the proliferation of potentials through which to articulate identity. In Smollett's novel, the modern regime of gentlemanly performance is treated as much more limiting. Yes, it allows Random to reclaim a stolen social position, but only through narrowly prescribed channels. Additionally, and crucially, this performativity undercuts the meaning of agency itself. As Rory's last name suggests, he is less an actor on the imperial stage than the object of accidents and events beyond his control. Unlike in *Tom Jones*, where pedagogy enables Tom to bring exterior and interior into alignment, Smollett's protagonist learns how to mimic behaviors and appearances that often appear to correlate very little with the social and political realities underneath.

It is the disjuncture between the performance of gendered social identity and the fantasy of a stable identity that is innate rather than performed that is the source of the novel's central tensions throughout. And for the vast bulk of *Roderick Random*, the eponymous Scotsman's story is an unending string of disappointments, setbacks, and humiliations. The cruelty of Roderick's tale begins even before his birth, when his father commits the unpardonable offense

of marrying against Roderick's grandfather's wishes.³⁹ As a youngest son, Roderick's father would not have been next in line to the wealthy patriarch's lairdship, but he could certainly have expected to be provided for, not only financially but also in the ability to make use of his family name and influence to obtain a position commensurate with his social standing. Instead, he is left to his own devices in the world, and the shock of the patriarch's coldness coupled with Roderick's arduous birth soon kills his young wife. In framing the disinheritance as an unambiguous act of cruelty, Smollett begins to critique patriarchalist discourse and its extreme demands of absolute submission to fathers from the novel's outset. Moreover, the grandfather's taunt that Roderick's father has "made the grand tour" and is "a polite gentleman" prefigures the question of identity with which Roderick will struggle for most of the narrative. He is a gentleman according to the old discourse of consanguinity and, so, he can expect the degree of autonomy and authority associated with that rank. Yet the withdrawal of his father's wealth and protection leaves him with no means of demanding his gentlemanly status be respected. Much as his son will later be, Roderick's father is left with the status of upper-class manhood but without the substance, a foundational crisis that means the younger Roderick's path to agency and gentility (if such a path can be found) will depend on a social pedagogy and learned performance instead of blood.

This, in turn, means Roderick himself begins his adventures as an outsider of sorts even within his native Scotland, with no capital to support his name, but a name, his readers are made aware, that should entitle him to more than menial service. However, this problem of identity is greatly compounded when he sets out for the imperial capital as a young man to seek his way back to the status that should be his by birth, since the new economic and political reality means

³⁹ *RR* 2. See note 12 above.

that his best chances for reclaiming his Scottish social position are through England and the empire. In some ways, Roderick's journey (accomplished partly on foot and partly in the ignominious conveyance of a wagon) might suggest for later readers Sir Walter Scott's Jeanie Deans in *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), who walks the more than 300 miles from Edinburgh to London to secure a royal pardon for her condemned sister. But whereas Scott would depict the early decades of union and the upheaval of historically Scottish institutions in heroic terms through Jeanie's solitary journey, Roderick's expedition is marked in typically Smollettian spleen and satire. The narrative's bitterness attains a crescendo when Roderick (accompanied by his faithful friend/servant Hugh Strap) arrives in the city:

As we walked along, Strap, at my desire, enquired of a carman whom we met, whereabouts Mr. Cringer lived; – and was answered by a stare accompanied with the word, ‘Anan!’ Upon which I came up in order to explain the question, but had the misfortune to be unintelligible likewise, the carman damning us for a lousy Scotch guard, and whipping up his horses with a ‘Gee ho!’ which nettled me to the quick, and roused the indignation of Strap so far, that after the fellow was gone a good way, he told me he would fight him for a farthing. (RR 62)

For a reader encountering this text for this first time, the central component of Smollett's humor here is potentially confusing. Roderick's written language is fluent, standard English – the cosmopolitan tongue of a gentleman. We might expect him to have difficulty deciphering the London dialect of the carman but would not expect this inscrutability in the opposite direction. In fact, this is as close as Smollett comes to reminding us that Random's spoken tongue would be Scots. As John Richetti notes, Smollett was adept at transliterating (or occasionally inventing) dialects for his subordinate characters, but he does so generally in scenes in which speech is

“heavily marked for comic effect.”⁴⁰ This scene of misapprehension and transnational animosity would appear to be an ideal location in which to deploy this strategy, particularly as it continues in an increasingly slapstick vein: “While we were deliberating what was next to be done, an hackney coachman driving softly along, and perceiving us standing by the kennel, came up close to us... made his horses stumble in the wet, and bedaub us all over with mud” (*RR* 62).

Janet Sorenson focuses on the degree to which the older Rory who narrates the novel labors to suppress Scots language into a largely implied rather than directly illustrated register.⁴¹ While this is undoubtedly a prominent feature of *Roderick Random*, overemphasizing the novel’s fraught linguistics occludes the ways in which Smollett is far less reticent about depicting other features of Random’s foreignness or difficulties in maintaining the appearance of upper-class manliness. Although his given name is Germanic in origin, it is also used as a standardization of the Scots-Gaelic “Ruaidhri” – “the red.”⁴² Given that Roderick is frequently interchanged with “Rory” in the text, and given that the Gaelic root so nicely matches his striking red hair, it seems certain that Smollett has the Celtic root in mind far more so than the Saxon alternative. As with the Scots-inflected accent the narrative moves to suppress, Rory Random must learn to disguise this aspect of his identity as well. Once in London, Random and Strap seek out the help of a fellow Scotsman who runs a language school in the capital, asking him for counsel:

I pulled out Mr. Crab’s letter, and told him the foundation of my hopes; at which he stared at me, and repeated, ‘O Ch—st!’ – I began to conceive bad omens from this behavior of his, and begged he would assist me with his advice; which he promised to do very frankly; and as a specimen, directed us to a perriwig ware-

⁴⁰ Richetti, *The English Novel*, 175.

⁴¹ Sorenson, *The Grammar of Empire*, 106-107.

⁴² See Paul-Gabriel Boucé’s note to page 7 in Boucé, notes to *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, by Tobias Smollett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 437.

house, in the neighbourhood, in order to be accommodated; laying strong injunctions on me not to appear before Mr. Cringer, till I had parted with these carrotty locks, which (he said) were sufficient to beget an antipathy against me, in all mankind. (RR 67)

Random's "carrotty locks" render him alien in the capital, but the schoolmaster's advice transforms this anti-Scottish sentiment into a more global truth. After all, Cringer is himself Scottish – the Member of Parliament for Rory and Strap's home constituency. The idea that Rory's apparent ethnicity would "beget an antipathy... in all mankind" further develops the concept of British gentlemanliness as cosmopolitan and global. Hence, it is both a gendered class position and one of transnational identity to which Random strives. To be Scottish is to be regional, constrained by one's own physicality, easily identifiable by one's appearance, and thus to stand out as an object of derision. Random aspires instead to a kind of universality that is implied to be inherent in British gentlemanliness itself.

In her study of the evolution of how character and type is conceived in the eighteenth century, Deidre Lynch takes note of this episode, arguing that it gets at a key contradiction in the novel. During an era of profound shifts in economic and social systems, Lynch writes that it was increasingly the servant classes that are represented in literature as distinct "characters" – objects that can be well-defined and reduced to taxonomy– and the gentlemanly class that resists such reduction by instead achieving generality.⁴³ In other words, the gentleman, although imbued by his social position with the agency and authority denied to other classes, could also transcend the rigid social categories that ensnared members of lower classes. Random seeks to attain a cosmopolitanism of character by standing out less prominently, but, as Lynch notes, Smollett is

⁴³ Lynch, *The Economy of Character*, 102-112.

reluctant to allow his protagonist to fully achieve this freedom.⁴⁴ In focusing on the national and imperial implications of the characterization Smollett attempts here, my account arrives at somewhat different conclusions as to Smollett's larger project than Lynch's. For one thing, Lynch reads Roderick's professions of gentlemanliness as pure fiction – if not patent absurdity – for much of the novel.⁴⁵ If the narrative of *Roderick Random* is conceived wholly within an eighteenth-century system of finance capital, Lynch is indeed correct. He has nothing of exchangeable value, neither real property nor ready money, with which to back his pretensions to gentility and hence is, quite simply, not a gentleman. Yet while this logic is certainly part of the novel's often-cruel comedy (it is the source of endless suspicions as to who Random really is) there is another, older logic in operation. Much as we witnessed premodern patriarchy abutting a system of Whig political thought in Defoe, Smollett stages a dialectic of social modes, premodern and modern, throughout *Roderick Random*. According to the logic of consanguinity and of aristocratic honor – a system by which social status is transmitted through blood – the rank that is Random's due never changes.

It is not, therefore, the case that Random attempts to ape a gentlemanly status he cannot in good faith support. It is, rather, that removed from his ancestral home, and left to his devices

⁴⁴ “Smollett not only sets Roderick up to achieve typicality – the representativeness and freedom from singularity that make a hero a gentleman – but he also seems to savor his hero's eccentricity. When Smollett wavers between undercharacterizing and overcharacterizing his gentleman hero, we see an instance of the flexibility that made characteristic writing useful at a period when established forms of social integration were being reexamined and when the forms of social inequality were being renegotiated – in part through a new insistence on making personal effects personal” (Ibid., 104).

See also Dror Wahrman on conceptions of identity in the eighteenth-century. In particular, his study of George Knapp's series of portraits in the 1740s for the Society of Dilettanti echoes the advice that Random get rid of his distinguishing red hair, as Knapp seems to go out of his way to make the facial features of his subjects as bland and indistinguishable as possible. Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self*, 180-181 especially.

⁴⁵ Lynch, *The Economy of Character*, 105.

in a place in which he is viewed as other, there is no one to attest to his origins. Hence, for much of the novel he is unable to produce the evidence that could potentially afford him access to a certain social station. Numerous accounts have described a fear of social mixing accompanying the rapid growth of London in the eighteenth century.⁴⁶ But the most pronounced fear in Smollett's novel runs in a different direction. Instead of worrying whether the young lady at the ball is, in actuality, a prostitute, or the young gentleman a thief, the young Scot of upper-class heritage in London worries that his own class position will be misunderstood. Thus, Random's education over the course of the novel consists of learning to embody a specifically modern, specifically British form of gentlemanliness and of acquiring the capital to sustain this character. This is not to say that the logic of bloodline would have been sufficient had the narrative remained in Scotland either. After all, despite the loyal submission of his faithful Strap, other fellow Scots treat Random with the utmost contempt. For instance, early in the narrative we encounter the brutal schoolmaster of his youth, who, upon the death of Random's grandfather, "laid aside all decency and restraint, and not only abused me in the grossest language his rancour could suggest, as a wicked profligate, dull, beggarly, miscreant, whom he had taught out of charity...." (RR 15). Yet while Smollett's novel (and all his writings generally) paint avaricious self-interest and cruelty as a common trait of all society, Roderick's status as an outsider, a native of a land officially equal in union with England but often treated in the capital as a colonial holding, makes the process of claiming the title commensurate with his birth all the more difficult. And the alienation of the outsider gives those moments in which veneer of

⁴⁶ See, for instance, Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), 30-31 especially.

performative English gentlemanliness is stripped away to reveal brutality and base passions their satiric weight.

Lynch is certainly correct, however, that Smollett never allows his protagonist to fully achieve the blankness of the gentleman. The fact that the young Scotsman is unknown in London has the somewhat paradoxical effect of marking him as a thoroughly visible character (if not ultimately decipherable) – that of the other – and it allows English high society to graft an assortment of prejudices upon him. Questions of masculinity (in particular, upper-class masculinity) are of central importance as the text works through these fraught textures of national identity, and failures to maintain gentlemanly status are frequently associated with effeminization or aberrant sexuality. Erin Mackie has argued that a fascination with criminal types, beginning in the Restoration and running through the eighteenth-century, worked alongside newer masculine ideals, such as sentimental gentility or Whiggish gentlemanliness, in maintaining a hegemony of patriarchy.⁴⁷ The authorized hero of, for instance, the sentimental novel does not replace the illicit rake or highwayman in Mackie’s account so much as the latter types support the associations of virility or despotic authority with masculinity that the gentleman could no longer own. In Random’s case, however, his sexual profligacy is clearly

⁴⁷ “However, any too overt and extravagant expression of sexual profligacy, at least among the genteel, stands at odds with the strictures of self-restraint, moral conformity, politeness, and decency: the gentleman risks devolving into the libertine rake. Yet on the other hand, without some signs of assertive, successful (hetero)sexuality, the expression of masculinity seems incomplete: the gentleman might be taken for a fop, or worse. More crucially, modern masculinity emerges with the notion of inward, inalienable sexual identity so that the expression of one substantiates the other. The status of the much-indulged rake, both among his contemporaries and among historical and literary scholars, depends heavily on this modern emphasis on sexuality as a confirmation of masculinity” (Mackie, *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates*, 8-9). I am indebted to Mackie’s account, but I diverge from some of her conclusions. Primarily, I argue for significantly more discontinuity between premodern, political patriarchalism and how the eighteenth-century gentleman was conceived than Mackie’s account allows for.

conceived of as undercutting his pretensions to agency and authority. For much of the novel, Random behaves with the rakish unrestraint that English society often appears to surreptitiously encourage and which early on comes to equate with physical enervation.

Several chapters after arriving in the capital, Roderick finds his little stock of money completely gone and his body suffering from a sexually transmitted infection. He soon encounters Miss Williams – a young woman whom he had courted previously believing her to be a gentlewoman before finding her, in actuality, a prostitute – in a similarly miserable state, and the two becomes each other’s confidants and protectors. The parallels between Miss Williams’s description of a feminine encounter with the capital city and Roderick’s own are striking. There are clear differences in the facts of each of the two cases (Random alone as a Scotsman in England and as a disinherited gentleman, Miss Williams having been seduced by a rake and then finding herself on the margins of society as a discarded woman), but the social position in which Random’s and Williams’s histories have placed them bares much in common:

So much candour and good sense appeared in this lady’s narration, that I made no scruple of believing every syllable of what she said; and expressed my astonishment at the variety of miseries she had undergone, in so little time; for all her misfortunes had happened within the compass of two years. — I compared her situation with my own, and found it a thousand times more wretched: I had endured hardships, ’tis true; my whole life had been a series of such, and when I looked forward, the prospect was not much bettered – but then, they were become habitual to me, and consequently, I could bear them with less difficulty. (RR 136)

Rory here attempts to create some distance between his situation and that of his friend but in ways we might not initially expect. The plight of the “ruined” woman is a convention in eighteenth-century literature with a very long life. We have little doubt that if Random’s schemes to make his fortune in the capital ever come to fruition, his gentlemanly state will also be affirmed by English society. As a former prostitute, however, Miss Williams would seem to have little chance of regaining her reputation and restoring herself to her bourgeois origins. Yet this is not the conclusion Random draws. He pities her not as a woman but as someone not inured to hardship as he has been from birth due to his grandfather’s cruelty. Indeed, Miss Williams’s fortunes begin to turn for the better before Random’s (she is soon hired as a barkeep) and without the humiliation of being violently pressed into the service of the Royal Navy.⁴⁸ Occurring at the nadir of Rory’s fortunes (or rather, one of multiple nadirs), this proximity of the status of the prostitute and the status of the solitary Scotsman registers the obverse of the gentlemanly power and agency Random strives for and which Smollett’s novel, at least in parts, implies should be his by birthright. The British gentleman in *Roderick Random* occupies the center of social prestige and authority. Random’s current state, however, as a foreigner in the imperial metropole is one symbolized through an association with effeminization.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Random suffers this latest indignity in the very next chapter: “...as I crossed Tower-wharf, a squat tawny fellow, with a hanger by his side, and a cudgel in his hand, came up to me, calling, ‘Yo, ho! brother, you must come along with me.’....Not being of a humour to relish such treatment, I disengaged myself of the assailant, and with one blow of my cudgel, laid him motionless on the ground: and perceiving myself surrounded in a trice, by ten or a dozen more, exerted myself with such dexterity and success, that some of my opponents were fain to attack me with drawn cutlasses; and after an obstinate engagement, in which I received a large wound on the head, and another on my left cheek, I was disarmed, taken prisoner, and carried on board a pressing tender; where, after being pinioned like a malefactor, I was thrust down into the hold, among a parcel of miserable wretches, the sight of whom well nigh distracted me....” (*RR* 139).

⁴⁹ I argue, then, that critics who view Miss Williams’ primary function as allowing Smollett to demonstrate Random’s capacity for sympathy and tenderness are missing the main point of these scenes. Ronald D. Spector, for example, does acknowledge the parallels between Random’s and

Smollett scholars have long noted that *Roderick Random* is a novel very much written for men and that its narrative reflects a “man’s world.”⁵⁰ With so much of the action set shipboard at wartime, in the army, or in the masculine realm of the eighteenth-century coffeehouse, this makes good sense. Nonetheless, I argue that Random’s relationships with a few select women are among the novel’s most balanced, or the ones in which Random’s situation and that of his female friend appear the most proximate. For instance, it is true that Random frequently commiserates with his fellow, non-English surgeon’s mates (the Welsh Morgan and the Scot Thomson) as they suffer abuse aboard the tyrannical world of the *Thunder*. And Hugh Strap’s devotion to Rory is one of absolute devotion. But none of these relationships contain quite the flash of sympathetic recognition and camaraderie, the sense of meeting a fellow traveler who feels the same isolation in a foreign land, as does Random’s friendship with Miss Williams.

Later in the novel, he feels a similar kinship to the reputed witch, Mrs. Sagely, whose life history bears a strong resemblance to that of both Random and his disowned father. Falling in love with and marrying a soldier without her father’s consent, Mrs. Sagely is disinherited by her family and left destitute when her husband is killed in action. For years, she has supported

Williams’s narratives, but he reads this moment as one of emotional growth for Smollett’s hero: “Her adventures permit Roderick and the reader to see aspects of the society in a way not easily discernible through the observations of an outsider. It makes available in Roderick’s world another aspect of the sordid and seamy life that Smollett’s novel satirizes. Not only does Roderick comment on the relationship of her experiences to his own and regard them as a learning experience, but he also responds in such a manner that allows Smollett to assure the reader of his hero’s fundamental goodness. That fundamental goodness, the exposure of Roderick’s better nature, is crucial to Smollett’s concern for winning sympathy for his hero.” Spector, *Smollett’s Women: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Masculine Sensibility* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 97-98.

⁵⁰ For example, Boucé, introduction, xxv. George E. Haggerty meanwhile argues that virtually all homosocial bonds in *Roderick Random* border on the erotic in their intensity, with the foppish Captain Whiffle (depicted in terms almost explicitly sodomitical) indexing a fear of this intensity. Haggerty, “Smollett’s World of Masculine Desire in *The Adventures of Roderick Random*,” *The Eighteenth Century* 53.3 (Fall 2012): 330.

herself as a nurse near the Sussex seacoast, a profession that, coupled with her solitary lifestyle, gives rise to a belief among the local population that she practices the black arts. Much as was the case when he learned of Miss Williams' life history, Roderick is drawn to Mrs. Sagely as a friend and confidant: "The whole behaviour of this venerable person, was so primitive, innocent, sensible, and humane, that I contracted a filial respect for her, and begged her advice with regard to my future conduct, as soon as I was in a condition to act for myself" (RR 215). Obviously, Miss Williams's and Mrs. Sagely's places in Smollett's narrative vary somewhat. The former is an ex-lover of Roderick's whereas the latter comes to stand in almost as an adoptive mother. Nevertheless, these two feminine life histories track Roderick's own in his current state of dispossession. That does not mean that this text is free of the aggressive misogyny that marks Smollett's fiction as a whole. Indeed, we need progress only a few pages beyond Roderick's initial encounter with Mrs. Sagely to find it in Smollett's portrayal of Narcissa's aunt, whose interests in languages and philosophy are ridiculed as grotesquely unladylike.⁵¹ And there is also a misogynistic aversion underlying the subaltern figures with whom Roderick does identify. Stripped of the protection of home or the capital to support gentlemanly position and authority, there is a not-so-latent fear in Roderick's narrative of emasculation, and despite the sympathy with which he describes Miss Williams or Mrs. Sagely, their own narratives give voice to this anxiety.

However, the misogynistic valence in Roderick's proximity to these two female figures does not predominate. The more immediate signification Smollett appears to intend here is the brutality of an English society that would so cruelly cast out Miss Williams or Mrs. Sagely,

⁵¹ "Your lady... is a maiden of forty years, not so remarkable for her beauty as her learning and taste, which is famous all over the county. – Indeed she is a perfect female *virtuosi*, and so eager after the pursuit of knowledge, that she neglects her person even to a degree of sluttishness..." (RR 216).

which is of course the same society that appears determined to block Random's every aspiration simply because he is a Scotsman. Furthermore, the fear of emasculation this proximity represents is countered by a more positive view of "feminization" that E. J. Clery has argued came to prominence in eighteenth-century thought during the century's middle decades.⁵² In his interactions with Williams and Sagely, Rory finds the compassion and sympathetic capacity of which the society of English *men* appears devoid at any level other than that of surface performance.

The idea of the young Scotsman's emasculation and *effeminization* in metropolitan society is rendered much less ambiguously elsewhere, notably in the specter of foppery that simultaneously repulses Random and into which his social performance appears in danger of slipping. Although foppishness and, indeed, its growing connection with sodomy are treated by Random with revulsion, the figure of the foppish Captain Whiffle serves a function not wholly unlike that of George Etherege's Sir Fopling Flutter in *The Man of Mode*. Etherege's fop's comic function consists of exaggerating the behaviors of the rake-hero, causing the rake-hero considerable anxiety about how his own social performance will be read. Of course, on the surface, Whiffle represents a type conceived of as wholly aberrant against which Random (a "real man") can reassert his own masculine identity. Laurence Senelick has described how, by

⁵² See Clery's summarization of the distinction between feminizing and effeminizing in note 23 above. Clery's account of Richardson's depictions of gender (in which the feminine is the moralizing force of civilization), which he links to Richardson's status as an outsider to London's social elite, evokes Smollett's alignment of his protagonist with the position of his female friends. "Richardson, as has often been remarked, had limited schooling and was an outsider when it came to the classics; this gave him a fellow-feeling with women, excluded from classical culture by their sex. In addition, although he was enfranchised as a property-holder, he was essentially a 'private' man, relatively detached from party politics and current affairs, centered instead on the workplace, a home full of women (four daughters as well as a wife), and a circle of friends and correspondents.... In a direct challenge to the public ethos, he begins to promote the belief that the source of moral reform is the private sphere, and that the impetus is to come from women" (Clery, *The Feminization Debate*, 110).

the mid-eighteenth-century, with the subsidence of an aristocratic modality and rise of a definitively Whig/Protestant and proto-bourgeois sensibility, the fop had morphed from his early manifestations as a gentleman-fool into a figure of deviancy held in utter contempt.⁵³ While Senelick is primarily concerned with stage representations of foppery, Whiffle is clearly cast along those latter lines, and Smollett gives us a long accounting of his extravagant wardrobe:

our new commander came on board, in a ten-oar'd barge, overshadowed with a vast umbrella, and appeared in everything quite the reverse of Oakhum, being a tall, thin, young man, dressed in this manner; a white hat garnished with a red feather, adorned his head, from whence his hair flowed down upon his shoulders, in ringlets tied behind with a ribbon. – His coat, consisting of pink-coloured silk, lined with white, by the elegance of the cut retired backward, as it were, to discover a white sattin waistcoat embroidered with gold... A steel-hilted sword, inlaid with figures of gold, and decked with a knot of ribbon which fell down in a rich tossle, equipped his side; and an amber-headed cane hung dangling from his wrist. (*RR* 194-195)

Smollett's satire here becomes increasingly vicious, as he soon extends this aberrancy of taste to encompass sexual aberrancy as well, informing us that Whiffle was accused "of maintaining a correspondence with his surgeon, not fit to be named" (*RR* 199).

However, as much as Random's self-accounting displays a desire to use Whiffle as a negative comparison and to bolster Random's claims to correct manliness, this appearance of foppery reverberates in later moments during which the protagonist attempts to support the status of a gentleman in London. Writing that "Scot and sodomite" are both juxtaposed with an idea of

⁵³ Senelick, "Mollies or Men of Mode? Sodomy and the Eighteenth-Century London Stage," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1.1 (July 1990): 33-67.

refined, “British” masculinity within Roderick Random, Shields contends that both figures (the former through overt aggression and the latter through his aberrant unmanliness) appear as similarly “self-interested and grasping, and as lacking economic and moral autonomy.”⁵⁴ Yet Random’s position as outsider at points aligns unsettlingly with the descriptions we are given of Whiffle far more than stereotypes of the violent or uncouth Scot. After his adventures in the Caribbean and in the French army, Random returns to the capital determined to make his fortune by seducing and marrying a wealthy gentlewoman (any interested wealthy gentlewoman with whom he can successfully defer the question of his fortune until after his marriage):

and in the evening, [I] dressed myself in a plain suit of the true Paris cut, and appeared in a front box at the play.... I got up and sat down, covered and uncovered my head twenty times between the acts; pulled out my watch, clapped it to my ear, wound it up, set it, gave it the hearing again; – displayed my snuff-box, affected to take snuff, that I might have an opportunity of shewing my brilliant, and wiped my nose with a perfumed handkerchief; – then dangled my cane, and adjusted my sword-knot, and acted many more fooleries of the same kind, in hopes of obtaining the character of a pretty fellow. (*RR* 257)

Although Rory’s dress and mannerisms are not depicted as quite as over-the-top as Whiffle’s, they are not that far off either. In an extension of the same logic by which Random was counseled to mask his Celtic physical traits (his “carrotty locks”), Random here attempts to ape a concept of English gentility and instead becomes the foppish clown. Moreover, the goal of the affectations he adopts – finding, or rather, conning a good match whose fortune could support his claims – further serve to undercut the ideal of masculinity identity and agency to which he

⁵⁴ Shields, *Sentimental Literature*, 60.

strives. Asserting gentlemanly position in the imperial society Smollett depicts demands fortune (of which Random has none for much of the novel) and the skillful performance of a social identity (which he does badly). The lack of these amount to being something less than fully British and something less than fully a man.⁵⁵

As the episodes I flagged at the beginning of this section illustrate, Smollett's novel treats these performances with contempt, however necessary they may be to its protagonist's social advancement. In moments of crisis, or in scenes even slightly out of the public gaze of the metropolis, English gentility collapses and English society itself appears to work against Rory's moral-pedagogical trajectory. Ultimately, the novel does entertain participation in the work of empire as a path to agency for young men of the periphery, as this chapter's final section will explore. Reclaiming his ancestral lairdship functions both as the telos of masculine development, won through toil and learned virtue (a construction almost Defoean). At the same time, Rory's homecoming back to Scotland and the bucolic fantasy of the beloved laird must stand as a kind of rejection or abandonment of the very imperial venture that enables Rory's triumphant return and underscores the emptiness of his acquired performative fluency.

Laird Random

While Smollett is more explicitly concerned with the economic potentials of imperial capital and what that might mean for traditional masculine agency than is *Tom Jones*, an economic register is clearly present in both novels. The idea that virtuous behavior, ingenuity,

⁵⁵ Indeed, Rory's plan to repair his finances through a good marriage is a source of great shame. Take, for instance, Random's reaction when he learns of a rumor circulation that he is "an Irish fortune-hunter": "This last hypothesis touched me so near, that, to conceal my confusion, I was fain to interrupt his detail, and damn the world for an envious meddling community, that would not suffer a gentleman to live without molestation" (*RR* 284).

and willingness to work enabled social mobility and were a better index of a person's rightful social position than rank and bloodline is a persistent eighteenth-century idea imbricated in a modern view of commerce.⁵⁶ Thus, while Smollett and Fielding both end up reaffirming the importance of the squire to their novels' respective worlds, they alter the foundations of his power and agency.⁵⁷ And yet Random's return to lairdship must read as a kind of disillusionment – an unwillingness or incapacity to explore this trajectory any further in a way that Fielding's reformation of squirearchy is not. In Fielding, we trace a revision of the premodern typology according to the logic of the new Whig order, with the patriarch retained as a stabilizing icon whose signification has altered. In Smollett, the archaic and residual, although sharply criticized early and often, is finally embraced at the expense of the modern.

I have argued above that *Roderick Random* turns to the empire and the business of its administration as a route to power and agency for young men from the Celtic periphery – advancing an emergent, broadly British form of gentlemanliness. But the novel ends where it began, in Scotland, on the Random's ancestral estate. While Random has cultivated a British-social performance for much of the novel, going to great lengths to appear less obviously Scottish and more the archetypal gentleman, at the novel's conclusion he seems to have little appetite to return to the imperial metropolis. Random marries his wife, Narcissa, knowing that her boorish brother will likely withhold her inheritance because he disapproved the match. The couple learns he had no power to do this under the specific terms of her father's will, but Random appears willing to quietly acquiesce on this point:

⁵⁶ Defoe deploys this idea in all of his novels, even as he puts a great deal of pressure upon it.

⁵⁷ Pocock's account of the emergence of mobile property in the eighteenth century and its concomitant suppression of earlier ways of understanding rank and character remains the starting point for scholars assessing these issues. Pocock, "The mobility of property," 103-123.

I would have set out for London immediately after receiving this piece of intelligence, but my dear angel has been qualmish of late, and begins to grow remarkably round in the waist; so that I cannot leave her in such an interesting situation, which I hope will produce something to crown my felicity. (RR 435)

Arguing that what she calls Random's "sentimental" education involves channeling venal drives into imperial channels, Shields suggests that Smollett's protagonist becomes an acceptable, mid-century British gentleman by learning to exploit outsiders (for instance, West Africans on his slaving expedition). He becomes a virtuous Briton because his appetitive passions are refocused outside the kingdom, and a virtuous husband by becoming a "self-sufficient man."⁵⁸ Yet Random's navel-gazing is striking here – his happy marriage serving only as yet another prize, undermining the moral reformation the novel in places suggests. Furthermore, and importantly, the novel's final paragraphs call into question Random's claims to an emphatically British form of gentlemanliness. Although Random asserts he "would have set out for London immediately," he seems eager to retire into the familiarity and comfort of his newly won Scottish estate. Nor do these lines give us much reason to suspect he will eagerly resume his quest once his wife is delivered of their (or, as Rory casts it, *his*) child. His tale becomes less a tale of forming a British gentleman and more a narrative of regaining an ancient Scottish social position through a new set of modalities.⁵⁹

But to what degree is even this insular homecoming the product of Random's education and learned gentlemanly performance? In many ways, Smollett's novel does appear a masculine

⁵⁸ Shields, *Sentimental Literature*, 66-67.

⁵⁹ Shields, *Sentimental Literature*, 68-69, notes this seeming capitulation, but her account emphasizes the Britishness of the novels project. Meanwhile, Gottlieb suggests that the fact that the Randoms' happiness relies on imperial capital is a fact that further complicates the novel's larger, "British" project. Gottlieb, *Feeling British*, 71-72.

Bildungsroman (*avant la lettre*), and Random is obviously faced with many physical, mental, and emotional challenges along the way to the novel's comic conclusion. However, Random's final success has little to do with his own merits (acted or innate) and everything to do with the goodwill of others or to unbelievably good fortune. Although Rory begins to make progress in his courtship with Narcissa about three-quarters of the way through the novel, he is unable to complete this union until the novel's final pages, as he remains without fortune and Narcissa remains under the despotic sway of her squire brother. His luck truly begins to turn only when his uncle, Tom Bowling, returns at the end of his own successful peregrinations as a merchant captain and offers Random a place aboard a slaving expedition. If the novel holds out ascendancy through imperial capital as a possibility to a hard-working young Scot, it is not really Rory's toil that yields financial success, a fact that further calls into question the content of the gentlemanly behavior he learns to produce.⁶⁰ This point is underscored when Random is reunited with his long-lost father, who has amassed a substantial fortune during his exile in Spanish America. It is a deeply improbable reunion, as Rory had no reason to suspect the elder Random was alive and certainly not that his voyage would lead him back to his father:

Don Rodriguez, with an uncommon eagerness of voice and look, pronounced, 'Pray, captain, what is the young gentleman's name?' – 'His name (said my uncle) is Roderick Random.' – 'Gracious Powers!' (cried the stranger, starting up) – 'And his mother's' – 'His mother (answered the captain, amazed) was called Charlotte Bowling.' — 'O bounteous heaven! (exclaimed Don Rodriguez, springing across the table, and clasping me in his arms) my son! my son! have I

⁶⁰ While I argued in Chapter 1 that Defoe is much more attuned to the horrible realities of transatlantic slavery than man critics have given him credit for, Smollett's novel betrays no such anxieties.

found thee again? do I hold thee in my embrace, after having lost and despaired of seeing thee, so long?’ So saying, he fell upon my neck and wept aloud with joy.

(RR 413)

Unlike *Robinson Crusoe*, *Roderick Random* is not generally concerned with Providence or with accounting for a divine, moral order. Instead, the Randoms’ reunification serves to emphasize the randomness of the narrative itself. Imperial capital does prove Rory’s path to acknowledged gentlemanliness, but the novel stops well short of suggesting a model of any kind of praxis. For Random’s agency in acquiring this wealth is suspect – tenuous at best.

In fact, Smollett’s ending troublingly obviates the need for Rory’s moral pedagogy and gentlemanly performance at all. As I demonstrated in this chapter’s first section, metropolitan-imperial society frequently appears to undercut Rory’s development, the brutality he is faced with necessitating further brutality on his part. But what does that matter anyway? His benevolent uncle has done well for himself and is ready to share the bounty. His loyal servant Strap is always there to assist in a pinch. And his father has made a considerable fortune in the New World. As readers of a comedy, we can rest assured that the author will right everything in the end, and Narcissa and Rory will live happily ever after in Scotland. If I seem flippant here, it is because flippancy appears to be very much Smollett’s point. *Roderick Random* gives voice to the dejection and anxieties of the young Celtic man who has been lured to the capital by the promises of imperial wealth and prestige only to find himself utterly alone, an object of contempt and aversion. After several hundred pages of disappointing his protagonist, the authorial hand holds out the patronage that Random realizes early on is crucial to success in the metropolis. The fact that an actual Scotsman in Random’s position (say, Tobias Smollett) would not have the benefit of such an omnipotent patron to rely upon imbues the novel’s concluding chapters with a

bleakness beneath the ostensibly happy ending. Whereas Fielding posits a new model of masculine pedagogy that he seems to fear is beyond the capacity of the nonfictional world, Smollett appears to abandon that project entirely. That Rory's narrative ends on such a cynical note registers a set of anxieties of the colonial young man with which Jones's narrative does not have to contend.⁶¹

Nevertheless, Smollett and Fielding both invoke the icon of the squire/laird – the benevolent country patriarch of a bucolic fantasy past – in an effort to stabilize the moral universe that their novels have thrown into flux. Just because Smollett gives us no real reason to think Rory has earned much of anything in his long struggles through the empire, nor that the elaborate set of behaviors he learns to produce have had much to do with his happy outcome, does not mean he gives us no idea of what a kind, right-feeling country patriarch should look like:

As there is no part of the world, in which the peasants are more attached to their Lords, than in Scotland, we were almost devoured by their affection, in getting out of the coach: My father had always been their favourite, and now that he appeared their master, after being thought dead so long, their job broke out into a thousand extravagancies: When we got into the court-yard, we were surrounded by a vast number, who crowded together so closely to see us, that several were in danger of being squeezed to death; those who were near Don Rodriguez fell upon their knees, and kissed his hand, or the hem of his garment, praying aloud for long

⁶¹ Thus, my account of the ending meets Beasley's only in part, since Beasley would also attribute to Smollett's vision a "world as it might be" quality. That would suggest that Smollett's vision also attempts some kind of coherence by which Random should attain this ending. But the imperial world through which Random circulates is dominated by incoherence and accident for Smollett.

life and prosperity to him; others approached Narcissa and me in the same manner; while the rest clapped their hands at a distance, and invoked heaven to shower its choicest blessings on our heads! (RR 434)

Roderick Random is a novel about the savageries of imperial warfare and the complexities and disappointments of metropolitan life. And yet Smollett ends with his own “extravagancies,” inserting his protagonist into a manorialist allegory of devoted peasants and kindly, all-powerful lairds in an insular Scotland. The retreat to a premodern, sociopolitical dependency on his Scottish estate restores to Random an agency he has sought throughout, even as we have been made acutely aware of the problematics and potentials for abuse that form of masculine agency entails. As he will be for all the texts that the second half of this dissertation discusses, the squire thus serves as an important, intermediate figure, existing somewhere between past and present. In an increasingly complex imperial society, where national concerns were becoming truly global and vast movements of capital were radically altering personal possibilities, the familiar figure of the country gentleman emerges as an important site of revision – an idea through which to explore the interplay between tradition (or, often, myth) and modernity. But he also comes to register a crisis of self-understanding attending the imperial project – an atavistic longing for a more localized and more comprehensible sphere of action that the expanding horizons of empire were closing off rapidly.

CHAPTER 3

PLANTERS AND NABOBS: PROPERTY, CAPITAL, AND THE COLONIAL GENTLEMAN

Where humane and equitable Laws prevail, SLAVE and SERVANT will be almost synonymous Terms, distinguishable only by the annexed Conditions of *temporary or perpetual*; under which Conditions, the last would often be the most Happy: For now, in *England*, the *temporary Servants* lament proverbially, *that Service is no Inheritance*; which Proverb probably took its Rise, from the Time when the *enfranchised Bond-Slaves* had begun to feel themselves *poor Freeman*, after the Alienation of their *Copy-Hold Tenements*.

— Joshua Steele, writing as Philo-Xylon¹

In time, a numerous gang of sturdy slaves,
Well-fed, well-cloath'd, all emulous to gain
Their master's smile, who treated them like men;
Blacken'd his Cane-lands: which with vast increase,
Beyond the wish of avarice, paid his toil.

— James Grainger, *The Sugar-Cane*²

When Joshua Steele arrived in Barbados in 1780, he was greatly distressed by the system of slavery and law codes supporting it that he found in Britain's oldest sugar colony. Although

¹ Steele [anon.], *Letters of Philo-Xylon, First published in the Barbados Gazettes, during the Years 1787 and 1788. Containing the substance of several conversations at sundry times, for seven years past, on the subject of Negro laws, and Negro government, on plantations in Barbados* (Barbados: Printed by Thomas Wilmott Perch, 1789), 46-47.

² Grainger, *The Sugar-Cane: A Poem*, in *The Poetics of Empire: A Study of James Grainger's The Sugar-Cane*, ed. John Gilmore (New Brunswick: The Athlone Press, 2000), 86-163, 1.609-614. References are to this edition.

Steele was a correspondent of the English abolitionist William Dickson, he did not himself wish to see immediate emancipation. A planter with a large estate on the island, Steele owned hundreds of slaves and depended on their forced labor for his wealth.³ Nevertheless, he was appalled by the realities of Caribbean chattel slavery. The existing practice was inhuman; it relied upon and encouraged widespread brutality, and Steele believed that it actually contravened the planters' own financial interests.⁴ Steele favored reform and what came to be known as amelioration, a movement in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Caribbean that sought a compromise between outright abolition and continuance of a status quo that the metropole viewed with increasing aversion.⁵

But Steele's specific ideas were quite radical, and other planters perceived them as so foolhardy and dangerous that Steele became a virtual outcast. Essentially, Steele sought to extend rights and protections of Barbadian law to the colony's slaves, transforming them from the absolute property of the planter into nascent political subjects. In place of the arbitrary rule of white overseers, plantation discipline would be administered by courts composed of other

³ Steele's general biography is hazy, and much of what we know comes from his writings on the slave economy and plantation management or from his correspondence with English abolitionists. David Lambert provides a helpful account of Steele's ideas and their relationship to the broader late-eighteenth-century debates on abolition and amelioration. See Lambert, *White Creole Culture, Politics, and Identity in the Age of Abolition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 41-72.

⁴ Among Steele's strongest objections to the extant slave code was the statute in Barbadian law that forbade blacks (free and slave) from testifying against whites. For one thing, Steele recognized that this gave whites *de facto* immunity from prosecution in physically assaulting blacks. But he said it also left plantation owners, particularly the absentees who made up a large portion of the upper echelons of the plantocracy, open to the thievery and malfeasance of unscrupulous overseers. This theme runs throughout the essays Steele published in the 1780s as the "Letters of Philo-Xylon." See, for instance, Steele, *White Creole Culture*, 2, 7, 10, and 13-18.

⁵ For a thorough history of this movement and Caribbean slavery more broadly, see J. R. Ward, *British West Indian Slavery 1750-1834: The Process of Amelioration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

slaves.⁶ Slave owners would no longer be able to freely sell slaves from the land (or to rend them from their families) without consent. And, most crucially for Steele, slaves would be given a limited form of property rights. Like serfs under the old Norman laws of England, slaves would possess an inheritable “copy-hold” claim to the estate they were born on, with rent payable in labor and excess revenue theirs to keep. Indeed, Steele was so confident in the protections that would necessarily flow from such a claim that he thought Caribbean slaves would enjoy much more physical, moral, and economic security than landless British laborers, who were every day adding to “the enormous Burden of the Poor’s Rates, and the Increase of worthless Vagrants all over the Kingdom.”⁷

Needless to say, Steele’s plan of reform was never adopted. Derided by a plantocracy in which the dogma of European racial superiority as a justification for slavery was already developing by the late eighteenth century, his writings were soon forgotten.⁸ But Steele’s proposals illustrate the ideology of property’s centrality to the emerging ideologies of empire during the period. His writings register the consequences of failing to check these claims of dominion – that, far from establishing the roots of a civil society as the Lockean tradition would have it, property right could be used to legitimate an unbridled imperial despotism that respected neither geographic boundaries nor the subjecthood of other human beings. However, the disturbing implications his ideas raise also indicate why discourses of property were so attractive to authors seeking to assert the colonial gentleman’s rule; the familiar logic of estate and social position that supported Whig squirearchy at home could be made to open vast new avenues of authority and agency in the colonial space.

⁶ Steele, *Letters of Philo-Xylon*, 30.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁸ Lambert, *White Creole Culture*, 65-72.

This chapter explores how a fixation on property as the foundation of imperial gentlemanliness drives one of the best-known literary works produced in the eighteenth-century British Caribbean – James Grainger’s enigmatic West-Indian georgic, *The Sugar-Cane* (1764). More broadly, I work toward an account of masculinity and property at a crucial stage in the history of British colonialism, when the First British Empire was approaching its zenith and the Second British Empire on the verge of beginning.⁹ To this end, the latter portion of this chapter places Grainger in dialogue with another colonial gentleman who, on the surface, could not be further from *The Sugar-Cane*’s ideal – or from Steele’s vision of regulated colonial command. Indeed, the eponymous villain of Samuel Foote’s *The Nabob* (1772) tells us a good deal about the stakes of Grainger’s project, as does keeping in mind the Caribbean planter when attempting to understand Foote’s farce. In Foote’s play, anxieties concerning the nature of imperial property are front and center as he savages the East India Company’s agents as avaricious tyrants whose wealth allows them immense power and access to the heart of metropolitan society. Moreover, the proximity of the London elite to their corrupt colonial factors is a constant counter theme; the

⁹ Indeed, the 1750s marked the beginning of an extended period during which Britain’s burgeoning empire commanded a central place in the nation’s metropolitan consciousness, more so than the overseas colonies ever had before. The Seven Years’ War (1756-1763), a truly global conflict between the United Kingdom and France that drew in all the major European powers, the Mughal Empire in India, and the Iroquois Confederacy in North America, ended in a massive rebalance of power in Britain’s favor, from South Asia to Canada. Lord Clive’s victory over the Nawab of Bengal at Palashi in 1757 brought a large piece of eastern India unequivocally under the control of the East India Company, that byzantine, mercantilist entity which for a century had been both the source of immense new wealth and the subject of ongoing legal and philosophical controversies for the British commercial elite. A few years later, the war’s end saw Britain in possession of New France (Quebec) and its already strong position in the Caribbean further bolstered. For an engaging and thorough account of the EIC’s contentious history, see Philip Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). For a history of Britain’s Caribbean plantations in the decades after the war, see Ward, *British West Indian Slavery*, 38-60.

landed aristocracy are shown to be powerless to block the nabob's machinations and must ultimately rely on a City of London businessman – whose own trade strongly implies connections to imperial venture – to right the situation.

Grainger had moved to obscure such troubling implications of colonial property by collapsing plantocracy with the imagery and symbolisms of squirearchy – putting the country gentleman to sea to reconstitute and extend the British estate abroad. In rendering the Kittian plantation of a genus with the country manor, Grainger gives meaning and intelligibility to the planter's actions and being, elevating his status within the continuum of British manhood. The familiarity of the wise and beneficent British squire to which the planter is linked typologically attempts to suppress the darkest truths of colonial rule, and it also helps to bring the highly unfamiliar New-World landscape under the planter's patriarchal sway. Yet the insufficiency of *The Sugar-Cane's* attempts to envision an authority for the planter that would fully accomplish this – to reconcile a Whig ideal of virtue and benevolence and an absolutist despotism that the West-Indian system necessitates – leaves the planter himself a symbol not of beneficent command and control but rather one of ambivalence and anxiety.

The Nabob, meanwhile, appears to explode the very possibility of traditional squirearchy in imperial modernity by calling into question the form and meaning of the property modes upon which this identity rests. Sir Matthew Mite comes “thundering amongst us; and profusely scattering the spoils of ruined provinces, corrupted the virtue and alienated the affections of all the old friends of the [Oldham] family.”¹⁰ But it is, I suggest, more than just the relatively common trope of imperial wealth corrupting the metropole that Foote is deploying. A Laird Random or a Squire Jones can attempt to serve as the idealized anchor of Whig society precisely

¹⁰ Foote, *The Nabob; A Comedy, in Three Acts* (London: Printed by T. Sherlock for T. Cadell, in the Strand, 1778), 4. References are to this edition.

because they are, to a large degree, constituted by their estates – their portion of Britain itself – and the historical and affective bonds that come with those estates. However, Foote’s nabob draws his authority entirely from colonial capital, highly mobile and of ominous origins, which confers enormous power upon him, including the ability to buy his way into whatever sphere of metropolitan life he chooses. The fear is not merely that Sir Matthew can improperly influence London society with ill-gotten money. It is that this ill-gotten money renders the very cornerstone of masculine authority (the inherited country estate) obsolete.¹¹ After all, Sir John Oldham (the play’s symbol of old-model gentlemanliness) is so indebted to the EIC nabob that he is almost forced to allow Sir Matthew to marry his daughter to avoid debtor’s prison. That Sir John’s merchant brother, Thomas, ultimately prevents this catastrophe only underscores the former’s powerlessness.

The apposition of these two texts’ treatments of masculinity and property enlivens a major tension in eighteenth-century British thought, one that acquired special relevance in the imperial theater. J. G. A. Pocock famously explicates the shift in importance from landed property to mobile property for the national (and, indeed, global) economy over the period and the concomitant conceptual changes this shift produced. In Pocock’s account, landed property, which is conceived of as static, links to an honor-based concept of behavior and agency. Like the estate itself, honor was understood to be an inherent, consanguineous, and immutable quality

¹¹ Siraj Ahmed’s lucid reading of *The Nabob* argues that, for Foote, “the significance of the nabob lies not in any new threat that he poses but rather in the ease with which he enters the British state and economy, thereby revealing the indistinction between European progress and ‘Asiatic despotism’” (Ahmed, *The Stillbirth of Capital*, 96). Ahmed’s point is well taken and amply supported, but I would argue the enervation of the traditional English gentleman’s authority is very clearly at issue and not simply of a piece with the widespread corruption of the broader British elite. The very inability of Sir John Oldham to offer any resistance to Sir Matthew’s machinations suggests the collapse of what was, in the Whig imagination, a key pillar of the national order.

of gentlemanliness, immediately and universally legible. Meanwhile, the proliferation of commerce meant both that mobile property (capital) was in its ascendancy and that the nature of social exchange was radically altering. As trade frequently brought together total strangers, who nevertheless had to make quick assessments of each other's motives and credibility, Pocock argues a new paradigm of virtue (produced and performed in interactive encounter) began to dominate moral discourse.¹² Yet landed property remained central to agency in the political sphere – not only as a matter of law but also as a fundamental component of Whiggish political philosophy. Indeed, Ranajit Guha describes how reformers of East India Company rule attempted (disastrously) to impose a form of British squirearchy on Bengal in order to establish the basis of a constitutional regime.¹³ In both *The Sugar-Cane* and *The Nabob*, the struggle between these competing political commitments unsettles the signification of gentlemanly authority, as the texts' central figures attempt to straddle the ideological divide between premodern and modern understandings of this agency.

Foote's farce also lays bare unsettling truths Grainger's georgic moves to suppress. Just below the poem's sanguine surface, the gentleman's mobile property takes on especially ominous meaning in the Caribbean context, since the system of capital which makes possible the West-Indian squire's estate and links it to the channels of imperial commerce also (inescapably) encompasses human beings, torn, traded, and shipped from their homes. The African slave trade prepossesses the poem, even as Grainger seeks to bury the imagery of chained bodies traded across the Atlantic in a fecund countryside stabilized under a virtuous planter-patriarch. And yet his oft-repeated invocation of an iconic, landed authority is undermined by the incessantly global

¹² Pocock, "The mobility of property," 103-123.

¹³ Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

vision of imperial subjectivity his planter seeks to embody. Where Joshua Steele would attempt to turn back the political clock to repair the moral faults of colonialism – positing a resurrected feudal manorialism as a check on the arbitrary power planters held over their slaves – Grainger instead telescopes outward from an articulation of property rights to stake a virtually unbounded claim to rule spanning the globe. For Grainger, the georgic focus on the smallest details of agricultural practices and natural order works to found the planter’s dominion in a Lockean concept of labor bestowing ownership and thus political agency. Endowing his ideal planter with a command over literature, science, history, and philosophy, *The Sugar-Cane*’s estate comes to encompass human bodies via Enlightenment epistemology and assumed cultural supremacy that constitute the labor by which property is claimed. Learning “What soil the Cane affects; what care demands” (SC I.1) is the foundational work ensuring ultimately that “BRITAIN SHALL EVER TRIUMPH O’ER THE MAIN” (SC IV.680-683) – as the poem’s bellicose final line proclaims.¹⁴ The gentleman is, in the end, positioned not as the anchor of a traditional order that a writer like Steele sought to restore but as the heart of a modern, worldwide empire.

After two centuries of critical neglect, *The Sugar-Cane* is finally drawing sustained attention from scholars of empire and the eighteenth-century Caribbean. However, many of

¹⁴ The georgic was frequently deployed to span the conceptual and affective distance between hyperlocal and global, as Kevis Goodman has shown. Goodman argues that while classical georgic turned to the countryside for an antidote to the corruption of empire, eighteenth-century georgic was deeply imbricated in the mediation of imperial power. During the period, Goodman writes that georgic became a medium that sought to diffuse imperial anxieties via a renewed focus on the local and quotidian, but in the process, the form often illustrated (intentionally or accidentally) the indelible linkages between even those spaces understood as the most traditionally British and the modern spheres of empire and commerce. See Goodman, *Georgic Modernity*, 12. Consider, for instance, William Cooper’s cheerfully attentive newspaper reading in *The Task*, a poem that ostensibly privileges country retirement over metropolitan engagement. “’Tis pleasant, through the loop-holes of retreat / To peep at such a world. To see the stir / Of the great Babel and not feel the crowd.” Cooper, *The Task*, *William Cooper: The Task and Other Poems*, ed. James Sambrook (New York: Longman, 1994), IV.88-90.

these welcome and illuminating accounts have understated the full reaches of the authority Grainger works to construct or have missed the insistently global nature of the imperial identity he conceives.¹⁵ While his poem often promotes virtuous West-Indian manhood as an antidote to metropolitan enervation and explicitly advertises itself as an attempt to translate the Caribbean world for metropolitan consumption, *The Sugar-Cane* is not primarily concerned either with advancing the interests of the colony against the metropole or with the maintenance of metropolitan hegemony over the colony.¹⁶ Rather, it conceives an agency that transcends both spaces and supports the entire project of empire. Throughout, the microscopic focus on the life and work of colonial estates serves as the substratum of the grandest vision of British dominion. The planter's property, Grainger's poem repeatedly suggests, is the conduit through which empire is iterated and defended.

But in reading Grainger's georgic apologetics alongside *The Nabob's* much more intentionally and explicitly critical treatment of imperial masculinity, the instabilities of *The Sugar-Cane's* concept of virtuous planter authority become fully apparent. As the weighty presence of transatlantic commerce in the poem makes clear, Britain's colonies, although

¹⁵ For instance, Keith Sandiford sees Grainger as an advocate for "Creole autonomy," encoding in his verse a radical rejection of European tradition by inverting the standard imperial ideology of European authority/colonial subordination. Sandiford, *The Cultural Politics of Sugar: Caribbean Slavery and Narratives of Colonialism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 72. Shaun Irlam, by contrast, argues that the poem works to export a sense of Englishness in a capacious sense of the concept) to the colony at the same time as it attempts to export colonial culture for consumption and comprehension by British readers back home. Irlam, "'Wishing You Were Here': Exporting England in James Grainger's *The Sugar Cane*," in *ELH* 68.2 (Summer 2001): 377-396.

¹⁶ "My inducements to this arduous undertaking were, not only the importance and novelty of the subject, but more especially this consideration; that, as the face of this country was wholly different from that of Europe, so whatever hand copied its appearances, however rude, could not fail to enrich poetry with many new and picturesque images." Grainger, preface to *The Sugar-Cane*, in *The Poetics of Empire: A Study of James Grainger's The Sugar-Cane*, ed. John Gilmore (New Brunswick: The Athlone Press, 2000), 89.

thousands of miles away, were connected to the metropole via an enormous volume of traffic in commodities, capital, and people. If the planter, agent of Britain in the West Indies, were to become a hopelessly contaminated figure, what would that mean for Britons at home, enjoying the luxuries and wealth his estate produced? Sir Matthew's voyage takes him from Calcutta back to his origins in London, and he carries with him the faulty masculine pedagogy of colonial oppression and East-India-Company vice. Moral corruption learned (perhaps necessitated) abroad would not, *The Nabob* suggests, remain safely in far-flung corners of the globe, but would return home, transported and fueled by tremendous quantities of colonial capital. In this, Foote's farce anticipates a Burkean critique of the deleterious effects empire could have not only in Britain's colonies but also in its very heart.¹⁷ Grainger moves to defuse these problematics by reworking the planter as the familiar, benevolent, and stable country patriarch of the English countryside; Foote's nabob rejects this version of masculine authority entirely.

Property in the sugar colonies

Although *The Sugar-Cane* constructs the planter's sweeping authority outward from an initially hyperlocal fixation on the land, the power to claim and subjugate colonial territory was in truth supported by metropolitan might and the most aggressive visions of European prerogative. As Grainger's own biography illustrates, claiming ownership over other human beings (rather than land) was often the first endeavor of a would-be planter. Early abolitionists, and reformers like Steele, were quick to point out that such unlimited power was a distinctly imperial invention. Even the old, feudal copy-hold system of serfdom (*villenage*), extinct for centuries in Britain, allowed nothing like the absolute dominion West-Indian planters held over

¹⁷ Recall Burke's 1783 "Speech on Mr. Fox's East India Bill" that I discuss above in this dissertation's introduction. Burke, "Speech on Mr. Fox's East India Bill," 355.

chattel slaves, and colony law governing slaves ran counter to the laws currently in effect within Britain.¹⁸ But while Grainger's ideal planter in part justifies his right to such sway through his benevolence and his wise administration of colonial land and peoples, acquiring real estate sufficient for a profitable plantation was often beyond the finances of a gentleman newly arrived from the United Kingdom. For those, like Grainger, who came to the sugar colonies with limited means, human "property" was frequently the first investment they could afford.

Well known in London high society and certainly not penniless, Grainger nonetheless came to St. Kitts as a fortune-seeker, late in his life and apparently accidentally. Although his apologia for the West-Indian planter (a figure reviled by many in the metropolitan elite even before the rise of a serious abolition movement in the 1770s and 1780s) was to become his most famous work, his emigration to the colony was the result of a chance encounter at sea.¹⁹ Born to a Scottish Borders family of some local prominence, Grainger studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh (taking a degree in 1753 after several interruptions), and served for a period as a

¹⁸ The idea of bringing Barbadian law into accord with that of the metropole runs throughout Steele's letters, which dwell at length on the deviation of colonial statute from British jurisprudence. For instance, Steele, *Letters of Philo-Xylon*, 24 discusses the danger planters travelling with their slaves to the United Kingdom faced of seeing a court order those slaves freed once on shore since slavery was illegal in the British Isles.

¹⁹ This contempt is palpable in Johnson's reception of *The Sugar-Cane*. While Grainger counted him a friend, and although Johnson (perhaps for this reason) gave the poem a mildly positive review, Johnson was quick to condemn Book IV's treatment of slavery, in particular its callous taxonomy of African bodies: "here we think that tenderness and humanity, with which the former part of the poem seems replete, is, in some measure, forgotten. The poet talks of this ungenerous commerce without the least appearance of detestation; but proceeds to direct these purchasers of their fellow-creatures with the same indifference that a groom would give instructions for chusing an horse." Johnson [attrib.], "*The Sugar-Cane: A Poem. In Four Books. With Notes. By James Grainger, M. D. &c.*," in *The Critical Review: or, Annals of Literature*, vol. 18 (London: Printed for A. Hamilton in Falcon-Court, Fleet-Street, 1764), 276-277. In private, Johnson was dismissive of the project's literary merit as well, according to Boswell: "Johnson said, that Dr. Grainger was an agreeable man...but *The Sugar-Cane*, a poem, did not please him; for, he exclaimed, 'What could he make of a sugar-cane? One might as well write "Parsley-bed, a Poem;" or "The Cabbage-garden, a Poem."'" James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, ed. David Womersley (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 506-507.

surgeon in the British Army. By the mid-1750s, he was a member of London's literary circles, publishing critical reviews, historical essays, translations of Latin poets, and original poetry of his own.²⁰ In 1758, Grainger's former pupil, a young aristocrat named John Bourryau, asked Grainger to accompany him on the Grand Tour, in return for which Bourryau would settle a generous annuity on Grainger. However, first the pair was to visit the Bourryau's Kittian sugar plantation. On the transatlantic voyage, Grainger fell in love with Daniel Mathew Burt, the granddaughter of one former governor of the Leeward Isles and the niece of another. Grainger and Burt married and settled on St. Kitts in 1759, and Grainger began practicing medicine in the colony with ambitions of becoming a planter.

These dates and details mean that Grainger's experiences on St. Kitts coincide with the zenith of both British sugar cultivation in the Caribbean and of West-Indian slavery in arguably its most brutal incarnation.²¹ While smallholders had made up a sizeable proportion of early British settlement in the Caribbean, by the middle of the eighteenth century, the large-scale estate had become the standard unit throughout the British-held islands, with slave populations often approaching ten times those of white colonists.²² In addition to the ever-present fear of revolt, which was used to justify the system's horrific punishments, the relatively high price of provisions in the islands meant that many planters and overseers found it cheaper to quite literally work their slaves to death and replace them with new slaves brought from Africa than to

²⁰ See Gilmore, introduction to *The Sugar-Cane*, in *The Poetics of Empire: A Study of James Grainger's The Sugar-Cane*, ed. John Gilmore, 1-21, for the basic details of Grainger's life.

²¹ I mean the zenith in terms of average rates of profit. The price of sugar would be higher at other periods, but Ward cites the late 1750s and early 1760s as the most lucrative for the Creole planter. See Ward, *British West Indian Slavery*, 48 especially.

²² Gilmore, introduction, 14 records a Kittian population in 1756 of 21,891 slaves and 2,713 whites. On the eclipse of the smallholder by the large planter, see Ward, *British West Indian Slavery*, 8-37.

provide adequate nourishment and rest.²³ Such was the system Grainger would have found upon his arrival in St. Kitts, and it was a system in which he was soon participating directly. Not having sufficient capital to purchase his own plantation, Grainger instead purchased slaves to rent out to planters who needed extra hands for harvests and for the arduous task of extracting juice from the cane and refining it. According to John Gilmore, slaves who were a part of these “jobbing gangs” faced especially dire straits, since the hiring planter would work them even harder than his own slaves because he had no capital stake in the survival of a rented laborer.²⁴

The Sugar-Cane moves to obscure these terrible realities of claiming human property behind a regime of patriarchal benevolence and fine feeling. Throughout, Grainger counsels planters to follow the example of good Montano, an idealized representation of gentlemanly authority whose mild treatment of his human subjects wins their love and devotion, while also registering the brutality inherent in the existing system as unpleasantness that could be removed. Book IV – the most sustained direct engagement with the slave trade itself – begins with the “Genius of Africk!” (SC IV.1) lamenting the state of her sons and daughters in bondage:

A muse that pities thy distressful state;

Who sees, with grief, thy sons in fetters bound;

Who wishes freedom to the race of man;

Thy nod assenting craves: dread Genius, come! (SC IV. 14-17)

Yet the wistful longing for a post-slavery Caribbean quickly gives way to the business of administering the system. A brief address to Robert Melvil, a colonial governor “whose mildness smooths the face of war...And mak’st subjection loyal and sincere” (SC IV.30-32) begins a lengthy discourse on “What care the jetty African requires” (SC IV.35). For some 150

²³ Ward, *British West Indian Slavery*, 29.

²⁴ Gilmore, introduction, 17.

lines, Grainger constructs an elaborate taxonomy of various African nations, postulating which peoples possess the physical and mental traits suitable for which jobs. In a particularly disturbing passage, *The Sugar-Cane* comes very close to the Aristotelian tautology that the condition of slavery proves one is a “slave by nature” and thus foreshadows the stridently white-supremacist defense that would characterize the United States’ plantation society in the nineteenth century.²⁵

Yet, if thine own, thy childrens life, be dear;
Buy not a Cormantee, tho’ healthy, young.
Of breed too generous for the servile field;
They, born to freedom in their native land,
Chuse death before dishonorable bonds:
Or, fir’d with vengeance, at the midnight hour,
Sudden they seize thine unsuspecting watch,
And thine own poinard bury in thy breast. (SC IV.81-88)

The specter of slave revolt here threatens to undermine Grainger’s entire project of imposing authority on a chaotic, colonial space, and it is a moment at which the violence underlying the plantation system breaches the surface of the poem.

²⁵ Aristotle, *The Politics*, ed. Stephen Everson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 16-17. In the United States, the justification of slavery on the basis of racial superiority was well entrenched by the American Civil War. See, for instance, Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens’s infamous “Corner Stone Speech.” Stephens, “Corner Stone Speech,” quoted in Henry Cleveland, *Alexander H. Stephens, in Public and Private: With Letters and Speeches, Before, During, and Since the War* (Philadelphia: National Publishing Company, 1866), 717-729. However, as David Eltis points out, it is clear racism had a significant effect on the early development of transatlantic slavery, even if race theory was inchoate or not articulated as aggressively as it would later be. Eltis notes that economic theories positing financial incentives to utilize slave labor on the peripheries of empire in agrarian times do not fully account for “the absoluteness of the barrier that prevented Europeans from becoming slaves.” Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 275.

Yet the accounts of racial difference also expose the centrality of a capacious understanding of property to the worldview at the poem's heart. In moving to extend the boundaries of the planter's estate to encompass human beings in addition to the land itself, the strong affective bonds Grainger posits between colonial patriarch and slave transform into primarily a matter of planter self-interest. Note how quickly the poem shifts from the lofty, universal language of "freedom" to the much more narrow claim that the poem will teach how to "care" for slaves. The wise master will learn how to select and reject human subjects that can physically thrive on his estate the same way he learns what plants to nurture for their beneficial qualities and what to discard as weeds. Managing human bodies and managing the land are presented as virtually indistinguishable in praxis.²⁶

This rhetorical strategy is not simply a matter of callous indifference to suffering (although it is certainly that) or a failure to grasp moral truths that later transatlantic society would accept as a given. Grainger appears to feel full well the precariousness of the planter's claim as he constructs it in addition to the enormous ethical problems running through the system. The expansion of property right reads rather as the only possible conceptual avenue to bringing moral coherence to such practices. But the choice also sets up a conflict of ideologies that register the poem's central anxieties. It is unsurprising that property right proves insufficient for suppressing the horrors of slavery or for comfortably justifying the planter's reign. And *The Sugar-Cane* seems preoccupied with its own failure to effect a reconciliation of these ideas.

²⁶ Ian Baucom has described how abolitionist discourses of sympathy and common humanity arose in opposition the actuarial logic of proslavery forces that sought to reduce the moral problematics of slavery to a financial balance sheet. Thus, reiterating claims on slaves as property is a rhetorical choice that sought not so much to counter abolitionist arguments (as nineteenth-century racial discourse would) as to defer the question abolitionists posed entirely. Baucom, *Spectres of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

Whig discourses of liberty and sympathy run headlong into their own capacity to legitimate imperial conquest in this poem, which thus comes to explore central contradictions (latent and overt) in the entire imperial endeavor. Thematically, this paradox produces moments of casuistry, in which Grainger attempts to circumvent acknowledged evil by invoking a benevolent patriarchalism – positing that a virtuous planter of the right education could really become a figure of amelioration. Yes, the muses may lament the existence of slavery, but Grainger suggests that the captives of a well-managed plantation would enjoy a far easier lot than some “free” laborers of Europe. To illustrate his point, Grainger bemoans the plight of Scottish miners, whose subterranean existence removes them from the squierarchical, bucolic British countryside *The Sugar-Cane* seeks to reproduce in the colony.

Nor, Negroe, at thy destiny repine,
Tho' doom'd to toil from dawn to setting sun.
How far more pleasant is thy rural task,
Than theirs who sweat, sequester'd from the day,
In dark tartarean caves, sunk far beneath
The earth's dark surface; where sulphureous flames,
Oft from their vapoury prisons bursting wild,
To dire explosion give the cavern'd deep,
And in dread ruin all its inmates overwhelm? (SC IV.165-173)

On this point, Steele would likely agree. But while he argues that European laborers had been exposed to harsh conditions because of the loss of their old claims to heritable rents (and thus to some permanent stake in manorial property), Grainger posits the planter's assumption of a property claim to the slaves themselves as the crucial factor in their supposedly better condition.

For Grainger, the wise planter has two concurrent impulses to treat his slaves well. As with kindly Montano, right feeling will prompt him to behave as a benevolent master.²⁷ Yet self-interest is always in focus, and it is indeed advanced as the ubiquitous motivation for the planter's behavior. Healthy, happy slaves are productive slaves, *The Sugar-Cane* repeatedly asserts. A well-managed farm will boast rich soil and efficient sugar works, and the bodies and spirits of its slaves will be maintained in similarly good order:

How far more happy is your lot? Bland health,
Of ardent eye, and limb robust, attends
Your custom'd labour; and, should sickness seize,
With what solicitude are ye not nurs'd! —
Ye Negroes, then, your pleasing task pursue;
And, by your toil, deserve your master's care. (SC IV.200-205)

These lines echo Book I's image of Montano's cane lands "blacken'd" through an influx of African slaves and through the slaves own labor to increase the fertility of the plantation, and they underscore that vision's disturbing content. The poem tries to mute the mercenary nature of planter governance; "deserve your master's care" would seem to imply solicitous treatment is a constant the slave can repay rather than a fact contingent upon the slave's behavior. But this obfuscating gesture falls apart in the context of the poem's – and the passage's – broader logic. Grainger's discourse on slave selection and management all tends toward the production of a thriving and prosperous estate. The planter's African subjects are rendered as coterminous with their labor capacity; they become, in effect, both outlays of capital and capital themselves,

²⁷ In this regard, Grainger has strong affinities with a prevalent vein in the amelioration movement that sought to reform Caribbean slavery by making landowners better masters through education and example. Lambert, *White Creole Culture*, 65-72 explains that this paternalistic "planter ideal" also works to oppose calls for juridical reform of the manner Steele favored.

completing their reduction to forms of property (mobile and static). Moreover, the allegedly affective bonds of the estate transform into a component of the plantation itself; the planter's care and the slaves toil manifest as fundamentally quid-pro-quo.²⁸

We can clearly see, then, how *The Sugar-Cane's* focus on the gentleman's management of his colonial property works to reduce the problematics of empire to a self-justifying cycle of necessity and profit. Imperial business (which the poem depicts as the creation of agricultural fecundity and consequently of mobile wealth) demands the assertion and defense of prerogative under the auspices of the colonial estate in order to successfully produce the commodities upon which imperial capital rested. At the same time, the relentless demands of that business allows for the perpetual deferral of the moral challenges such unbounded authority poses. Yet the poem is never quite able to fully suppress these failings. For instance, midway through Book IV, the lamenting muse appears again to fantasize about a day (anticipating Steele's vision of amelioration) when the planter's subjects would be "Servants, not slaves; of choice, and not compell'd" (SC IV. 242). When that day might be is of course left unanswered – and is, indeed, unanswerable.²⁹ But this is precisely why the planter and his estate are asked to do so much

²⁸ In this argument, Grainger joins a substantial tradition of Caribbean writers who contended self-interest of the planter would improve the plight of slaves if planters could be convinced to correctly conceive the path to sustainable profit. Consider, for instance, the Antiguan planter Samuel Martin's 1750 tract on plantation management, which, while charging fellow planters with a moral duty to care for their slaves throughout suffuses this charge with reminders that laborers kept in good condition (physically and psychologically) are more valuable: "for plenty begets cheerfulness of heart as well as strength of body, by which more work is effected in a day by the same hands, than in a week when enervated by want and severity." Martin ["an Old Planter"], *An Essay Upon Plantership, Humbly inscrib'd to all PLANTERS of the British SUGAR-COLONIES in America*, 2nd edition (Antigua: Printed by T. Smith, 1750), 12. And even Steele, who wished to legally constrain the license the planter held over his slave-subjects, emphasized a view that mild treatment of slaves was good economic sense for their owner.

²⁹ Thus, Grainger's emphasis on progress and improvement anticipates nineteenth-century liberal justifications for imperial rule. As Uday Singh Mehta explains, postulating empire as the benevolent act of raising subject peoples to a European state of development allowed liberal

conceptual work. Constructing imperial authority as a matter first-and-foremost of property right, and then deploying a fertile estate in harmony under a wise master as the symbol of imperial felicity, Grainger moves to simultaneously establish and to justify the colonial gentleman's dominion. In the process, the West-Indian estate begins to encompass commodities, peoples, and power structures far beyond its geographic limits.

The imperial plantation

Readings that emphasize the insistently Caribbean character of Grainger's georgic note the numerous locations in which Creole gentlemen come to serve as lodestones of virtue for their dissipated European counterparts.³⁰ In the parable of Montano (unjustly driven from his European home only to prosper through industry in America), or of the lovelorn but daring young Junio whose bravery shames metropolitan Britons to martial heroism (*SC* II.487-496), the poem invokes classical themes of the country (mythic associations Grainger extends to encompass the colony) as the seat of morality. Toward the end of Book IV, Grainger speculates about a time when the New World may surpass the Old: "And must Britannia, Neptune's favourite queen, / Protect'ress of true science, freedom, arts; / Must she, ah! must she to her offspring crouch?" (*SC* IV.660-662). However, *The Sugar-Cane* soon pulls back from this vision of metropolitan decline, postulating a glorious future in quite jingoistic but definitively global terms:

imperialists to perpetually defer that telos, since the colonizer could always be depicted as outstripping the colonized. See Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*, 29-30 especially.

³⁰ See, for instance, Sandiford, *The Cultural Politics of Sugar*, 83-87. Meanwhile, Richard Frohock argues that Grainger's New-World gentleman transforms heroism into scientific inquiry aimed at good management and bettering humanity – a transformation that supersedes previous forms of heroism in Europe or America. Frohock, *Heroes of Empire: The British Imperial Protagonist in America, 1596-1764* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 174.

A golden aera dazzles my fond sight!

That other race, that long'd for aera, hail!

THE BRITISH GEORGE NOW REIGNS, THE PATRIOT KING!

BRITAIN SHALL EVER TRIUMPH O'ER THE MAIN. (SC IV.680-684)

As a whole, the poem reads less as an attempt to establish the ascendancy of either colony or metropole than to conceive an imperial present now coming into being under a new British hegemony. Grainger envisions the West-Indian planter as the channel of these transoceanic currents.

Of course, the primary concern of the sugar plantations was the production of a commodity meant for consumption on distant tables. One characteristic that differentiates Grainger's West-Indian georgic from other specimens of the genre is the insistency with which he keeps the global plain of which the Caribbean farm is a central part at the surface of the text. There is no mediating gesture like the one insulating William Cowper from the sweep of history in *The Task's* newspaper-reading passages.³¹ Instead, *The Sugar-Cane* sings the praises of "Mighty commerce" (SC IV.322), which transports its chief product many thousands of miles and, the poem declares, unites humanity in the process:

In vain hath nature pour'd vast seas between

Far-distant kingdoms; endless storms in vain

With double night brood o'er them; thou dost throw

O'er far-divided nature's realms, a chain

To bind in sweet society mankind. (SC IV.348-352)

³¹ See note 9 above.

But the sea-lanes treated here in such positive tones are the very routes that allow the planter's terrible dominion to be projected upon African shores – a fact of which the poem's muses are so painfully aware. These realities creep into the joyful imagery of transnational unification as well – “a chain / To bind” cannot help but assume an ominous resonance in a poem so thoroughly invested in the slave economy as the foundation of British commerce. The inextricability of the business of the plantation from empire in its broadest strokes helps both to render the world entire as the planter's concern and, by extension, to produce an imperial authority transcending colony and metropole simultaneously. The tremendous scope of the plantation's reach is seen even in its most mundane details. For instance, Book III focuses largely on sugar refining, with several suggestions for ensuring the product is pure and, thus, most desirable and most valuable. However, even this highly local industry relies on global commerce. The labor to man the estate's furnaces has been forcibly imported, but even the ingredients of the process come from elsewhere. Bristol lime, Grainger tells us, is vitally important to refining sugar, as is Bermuda lime, which is a close second in quality. Added at just the right moment, these materials will produce a superior muscovado “when no other art / Can bribe to union the coy floating salts” (*SC* III.391-392). An arcane bit of plantation work thus triangulates three distant points of the British Empire. The planter's colonial property – and by extension the planter himself – collapses thousands of miles to elaborate a set of intricately connected concerns and locales of production.

Throughout, the pervasive ways this global imbrication renders the planter's authority and purview themselves global paradoxically manifests in the business of subduing and tending to the colonial landscape. If, as for Locke, the first assumption of political authority resides in removing property from the common, *The Sugar-Cane* suggests that only the white planter

possesses the skills and knowledge necessary to stake such a claim.³² The poem performs (at times quite pedantically) an assertion of professional knowledge and epistemic fluency that supports the authority of the planter by suggesting these qualities are demanded by the nature of colonial land. The final paragraph of the preface acknowledges that in some ways the poem will not comport to established conventions of eighteenth-century verse, but it also claims that Grainger is not particularly worried about flouting convention:

In a West-India georgic, the mention of many indigenous remedies, as well as diseases, was unavoidable. The truth is, I have rather courted opportunities of this nature, than avoided them. Medicines of such amazing efficacy, as I have had occasion to make trials of in these islands, deserve to be universally known. And wherever, in the following poem, I recommend any such, I beg leave to be understood as a physician, not as a poet.³³

This aim results in sprawling footnotes that at points threaten to overwhelm the project as Grainger attempts to explain in great detail his Kittian references. Gilmore's modern edition renders these as endnotes instead, an editorial decision that greatly aids the poetic flow and unity of the main text but simultaneously masks the unruly character of the 1764 edition. Indeed, the original is a visual mess and a chore to read as the annotations proliferate. The notes actually make up the bulk of several pages on which only a few lines of verse appear. For instance, a reference to the complexities of sailing by aid of compass in Book I – “And where the magnet first its aid declin'd” (*SC* I.111) – sends Grainger off on a lengthy discourse on Columbus's discovery of magnetic declination, the Spanish settlement of Jamaica, and its capture by the

³² “Thus *Labour*, in the Beginning, gave a *Right of Property*, where-ever any one was pleased to employ it, upon what was part common” (Locke, *Second Treatise*, 299).

³³ Grainger, preface, 90.

English in the seventeenth century.³⁴ Depicting “the bending coco’s airy height” (*SC* II.438) necessitates a full account of the coconut tree and its apparently overstated benefits, with Grainger describing variants of the species and cautioning that “[t]he milk, or water of the nut, is cooling and pleasant; but if drunk too freely, will frequently occasion a pain in the stomach.”³⁵ And the poeticization of Virginia as “Raleigh’s land” (*SC* III.259) leads to a summary history of the exploration of North America, from Cabot’s 1497 voyage to Sir Walter Raleigh’s endeavors under Queen Elizabeth.

The georgic focus on quotidian details thus combines with Grainger’s extensive scholarship and taxonomic command to instill the idealized planter with perhaps his greatest source of authority.³⁶ On the one hand this allows the exportation of Kittian society to the metropolitan audience, but it also opens a way to a Foucauldian (and Saidian) concept of dominance via epistemology – a totality of command necessary, the poem strongly implies, to thrive in the colonial space. In effect, Grainger’s poem and its accompanying apparatus assert a claim that the planter-patriarch can know and represent the colony in infinite detail, capturing and cataloging everything from the soil of the island to its many indigenous species to its weather – and to the lives of the planter’s slave-subjects. Grainger throughout wishes to recast

³⁴ Grainger, Grainger’s Notes to *The Sugar-Cane*, in *The Poetics of Empire: A Study of James Grainger’s The Sugar-Cane*, ed. John Gilmore (New Brunswick: The Athlone Press, 2000), 171.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 186.

³⁶ David Shields views the copious footnotes as representing the failure of the georgic’s capacity to handle the scope of the project Grainger designed. Whereas other georgic poets (ancient and modern) had utilized the form generally to celebrate rural life, Shields writes that Grainger instead privileges “instruction.” However, I argue that the aims of the footnotes and the overall verse align in a unified assertion of planter authority. Shields, *Oracles of Empire: Poetry, Politics, and Commerce in British America, 1690-1750* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 73.

these iterations of hierarchy and command as progressive, tending to the benefit of colony, metropole, and world simultaneously:

Planter, improvement is the child of time;
What your sires knew not, yet their offspring know:
But hath your art receiv'd Perfection's stamp?
Thou can'st not say. —Unprejudic'd, then learn
Of ancient modes to doubt, and new to try:
And if Philosophy, with Wisdom, deign
Thee to enlighten with her useful lore;
Fair Fame and riches will reward thy toil. (SC I.278-285)

These lines evince a profound belief in the planter's ability to remake the world for the better. Moreover, the planter is responsible in Grainger's vision for evangelizing European civilization – specifically, and emphatically, British civilization – adapted to the specific needs of the colonial estate. Jethro Tull, the English agriculturalist, is one of numerous Britons in *The Sugar-Cane* to be lionized via classical allusion, as Grainger envisions the planter importing Tull's methods to the cane fields: “Might not the culture taught the British hinds, / By Ceres' son, unfailing crops secure; / Tho' neither dung nor fallowing lent their aid?” (SC I.289-291). In lines like these, Grainger's construction of the planter's power spreads out along multiple axes. Tull becomes the son of Ceres (the Roman goddess of agriculture), investing British science with the authoritative weight and heroism of antiquity, but he also represents the very latest in farming methods. And, taken in concert with Grainger's assurance about offspring knowing “[w]hat your sires knew not,” the icon of the planter gestures toward a future of increasing advancement and prosperity. The poem's colonial lord of the manor is simultaneously deeply traditional and ultra-

modern, a diachronic model of authority rooted in a mythologized past but also an active participant in the contemporary world of imperial commerce under Britain's benevolent dominion.³⁷

Hostile lands

As Steele argued and as *The Sugar-Cane* anxiously suggests, the planter's authority goes far beyond that those European models of Enlightenment could or would claim at home. Yet the planter's power is so absolute, *The Sugar-Cane* contends, because it has to be. While the specific demands of colonial property necessitate and support these vast claims to authority, colonial land also comes to encode the poem's deepest anxieties about the stability and sufficiency of planter authority. The splendor of St. Kitts belies a host of threats unknown in the United Kingdom; the island is seemingly Edenic, but it incorporates pre- and postlapsarian visions of the Garden, with the Caribbean paradise always on the verge of decent into chaos. At points, Grainger asks for the sympathy of British farmers who likewise know the powers of

³⁷ In a new essay, Britt Rusert argues *The Sugar-Cane* explores (both in its verse and in its editorial apparatus) the "experimental plantation" – a test site for bringing the Enlightenment discourses of rationality and inquiry to the practice of colonial agriculture. As New-World diseases, parasites, geology, and meteorology threaten the fecundity Grainger's planter carefully constructs, Rusert writes that the poem "ultimately dissolves into a more pastoral order that reveals how the ecology of the experimental plantation was constantly compromised by tropical species inside and outside the plantation borders." Rusert, "The Experimental Plantation in and against James Grainger's *The Sugar-Cane*," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 13.2 (Spring 2015): 345. Steven W. Thomas recognizes the progressive-imperial nature of this project, contending that Grainger and other Caribbean writers of the age presented European scientific advancement (particularly medicine) as the key to improving the condition of African slaves in rhetorical strategies that sought to solidify European dominance by pathologizing blackness. Realizing that Whig ideologies of rights could not be reconciled neatly with colonial realities, these writers turned to medicine and science to shift the conversation to another register entirely. Thomas, "Doctoring Ideology: James Grainger's *The Sugar-Cane* and the Bodies of Empire," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 4.1 (Spring 2006): 78-111.

nature, but he quickly stresses the incomparability of the experiences, with St. Kitts witnessing “woes unknown to Britain’s Isle” (*SC* II.24). Later in Book II, he asks “Ye men of Kent” to remember the damages that can be wrought by a gale off the North Sea: “When nipping Eurus, with the brutal force / Of Boreas, join’d in ruffian league, assail / Your ripen’d hop-grounds; tell me what you feel...” (*SC* II.196-200). However, he then describes an infestation of insects that has no British parallel: “alas, too soon / They burst their filmy jail, and crawl abroad, / Bugs of uncommon shape; thrice hideous show” (*SC* II.213-215). Elsewhere, Grainger suggests the unique hazards of West-Indian life strain even the classical mode in which he writes. The muse who once sang of the challenges facing the Roman farmer has never seen an Atlantic hurricane, and the event threatens to surpass the abilities of poetry to represent: “Say, can the Muse, the pencil in her hand, / The all-wasting hurricane observant ride? / Can she, undazzled, view the lightning’s glare” (*SC* II.270-272). What is more, not even the land itself is stable on a volcanic island. Grainger describes how “earthquakes, nature’s agonizing pangs, / Oft shake the astonished isles: The solfaterre / Or sends forth thick, blue, suffocation steams” (*SC* II.391-393). As with Whiggish squires throughout eighteenth-century British literature, a fantasy of traditional continuity via the heritable landed estate is an essential foundation of the planter’s authority. In *The Sugar-Cane*, however, the very ground of the plantation is uncertain and threatening, subject to the whims of sublime nature. What does it mean that even the soil of the gentleman’s estate can erupt, break apart, or blow away beneath one’s feet?

At the very least, the shifting sands and fracturing rock of the island put metaphoric pressure on the symbolic function of the planter and his estate, which receives its most serious challenge when Grainger treats West Indian slavery. The poem moves to repair these ruptures through its program of benevolent administration, which is characterized as good care of human

subjects and skillful care of the plantation's land simultaneously. Grainger's social vision for his idealized planter is clearest in the scene of Montano's death, during which the model planter attempts to bequeath his wise and temperate governance to his son. In addition to cautioning his scion to "Be pious, be industrious, be humane" (SC I.630), Montano enjoins him to be a kind master as well: "From proud oppression guard the labouring hind. / Whate'er their creed, God is the Sire of man, / His image they" (SC I.631-633). While lines such as these are about as close as *The Sugar-Cane* comes to fully acknowledging the realities facing St. Kitts's "labouring hinds," those realities are a readily apparent subtext, a serious wrong that Grainger attempts to address through poetics. Invoking common humanity on which to construct a sympathetic basis of planter governance (a rhetorical strategy that would also form the heart of the critiques of abolitionists such as William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson), Grainger's georgic suggests a pedagogical solution to the problem. A virtuous planter will not only see his investments and efforts yield tremendous profits, but he will also exercise the behavioral moderation and empathetic capacity necessary to ameliorate the plight of his slaves. When Montano's dying speech impresses the importance of this reformed model upon his son, Grainger tries to envision a new ideal of gentlemanly behavior for the West-Indian estate that will simultaneously enable prosperity and make the practices that support that prosperity (forced labor on a massive scale) less odious.

Structurally, Montano's death, when "all the Cane-lands wept their father lost" (SC I.646) seems as though it should close *The Sugar-Cane*'s first book. Instead, Grainger digresses upon weeding. The poem's logic is more coherent than a cursory reading would suggest, and indeed, it reflects the broader project Grainger seeks to complete via his planter-hero. Throughout the poem, Grainger invokes the idea of a hostile (although fecund) landscape in disorder that

requires the guiding hand of the European master to bring under control. And this reordering is depicted through patriarchalist conceits of filial loyalty and fatherly protection, albeit patriarchalism in a semi-Whig mode. These affective bonds between planter and subject extend beyond his heirs, and beyond his slaves, to the soil of the colony itself:

And now thy Cane's first blades their verdure lose,
And hang their idle heads. Be these stript off;
So shall fresh sportive airs their joints embrace,
And by their dalliance give the sap to rise.
But, O beware, let no unskilful hand
The vivid foliage tear: Their channel's spouts,
Well-pleas'd, the watery nutriment convey,
With filial duty, to the thirsty stem.... (SC I.663-670)

This digression into the specifics of cultivation follows one of the poem's several invocations of the muse, refocusing the poem from the mythic Montano back to its task of exploring and cataloging agricultural best practices. But while the "filial duty" described here ostensibly refers to a mature cane plant, the sprouts of which nourish and protect the stem, it also appears to refer back to the planter, who, when this individual cane plant is taken as part of the massive crop, will reap the benefits of its "reverential arms" (SC I.671). The cane grows well because the attentive planter has directed his slaves to tend to it in the proper ways at the proper time, and now the cane repays the efforts, fulfilling its "filial duty" to the father of the estate. A flourishing plantation testifies to the virtue and expertise of the planter, signifying his reward for comporting himself to the pattern of a Montano. But conversely, this image of bounty also comes to signify

the far-reaching tendrils of the planter's power on his estate, extending to the literal roots of the plantation themselves.

Throughout much of eighteenth-century British literature, the landed estate both signifies and realizes the social position of the gentleman. If we think of Henry Fielding's good Squire Allworthy, Samuel Richardson's reformed Mr. B., or any of Sir Walter Scott's protagonists who end their adventures happily ensconced in a country seat, we see a fantasy country house as a tidily bounded unit of thriving and reciprocal interrelationships between lord and subjects. A productive estate with a happy wife, children, tenants, and domestics is the sign of a virtuous gentleman and also the basis of his gentlemanly status. In a century when the vote depended on a claim to property, the country hall was often presented as the ideal base unit of political power. *The Sugar-Cane* explores what happens when these concepts are applied to colonial rule, elaborating the deep connections between agrarian property and the imperial state. That the poem leans so heavily upon the claiming and management of land as the source and the justification for absolute authority illustrates the dark obverse to the Whig fantasy of benevolent squirearchy. Twenty years later, Steele would suggest reining in the concept of the gentleman's property as a path to eventually extricating slaves from their abject state. But Grainger's poem (and, indeed, most of the participants in the slave economy) allows for no such abrogation of authority. Its entire understanding of imperial authority relies on its capacious idea of property and property right. That the poem is haunted throughout by a fear that the world cannot be brought neatly within the imagined bounds of the felicitous estate – that slavery clashes sharply with emerging ideals of rights, or that the land itself may resist the force and intellect of the colonizer – registers the anxieties attending the business of empire and the conceptual paradoxes at its heart.

Additionally, the adaptation of the British country gentleman to the colony, the attempt to make the staid symbol of stability of so many Whig novels mobile – an evangelizing agent of empire – illustrates the pervasiveness and perceived durability of this manly ideal. The disruption between what the country gentleman is intended to represent (virtue, order, benevolence) and the actual sources of his authority (imperial capital, domination, absolutism) registers both the cultural importance of this icon for writers of the mid-eighteenth century *and* the ideological stresses to which this icon was increasingly subject. In the next section, I take up *The Nabob*, a text in which the destruction of the traditional masculine ideal takes place not in the colony but in the metropole – via a young man hopelessly corrupted by the faulty moral pedagogy of colonial brutality. While Grainger exports the squierarchical estate to the West Indies in a bid to anchor the planter’s authority by a continuity with a preexisting, ancient mode of British masculine identity, Foote’s nabob draws his power entirely from imperial capital. It is a reorientation of gentlemanly agency that suggests broader insufficiencies in Grainger’s vision. The very mobility of Sir Matthew’s wealth, and the obscurity of its origins, opposes the (supposedly) instant legibility of the country estate as the source and symbol of the gentleman’s power and being. And the ease with which Sir Matthew threatens to subvert the logic of upper-class, metropolitan identity suggests the profound challenge the finances of empire posed in the latter half of the century.

‘Grown great by robbing the heathens’

If *The Sugar-Cane* addresses the destabilizing threat the ascendance of mobile property represented to gentlemanly authority by moving to obscure this very mobility – superimposing the image of a bountiful plantation and kindly squire over the realities of imperial capital – *The*

Nabob makes that threat the explicit target of its biting satire. Indeed, although East India Company nabobs receive the preponderance of Foote's scorn, no segment of the London elite is spared derision, and the play none-too-subtly hints at how far the tendrils of imperial capital now extend into the metropole. There is, of course, an aspect of the social critique that runs through Foote's late farce that is fiercely committed to defending a traditional order from modernity itself. While Sir Matthew's predations and corruptions abroad are adumbrated several times, the true danger he represents (as far as the logic of play is concerned) is to the aristocratic Oldhams – their fortune, property, and daughter. Lady Oldham makes this clear at the outset, lamenting Sir Matthew's "scattering the spoils of ruined provinces" mainly for the "scattering" part: "nor is it at all unlikely, but Sir Matthew, taking a liking to your family mansion, has pursued this very method to compel you to sell it" (*Nabob* 4). That a play so scathing about the morality of the growing imperial project orients around such elitist fears should not surprise us for two main reasons. The first is that *The Nabob's* aristocratic sentiments overlaid upon topicality are very much in keeping with Foote's entire corpus. Born in 1720 to the Cornish lower nobility/upper gentry, Foote squandered, made, and squandered again several fortunes over the course of his life, but he was always keen to maintain the character of a gentleman of old name. A famous mimic in his day, the guiding ethos of his often-vicious farces is skewering affectation (a charge repeatedly, and probably justly, leveled at himself) by lampooning the very latest metropolitan fashions and events.³⁸ As Foote was drafting *The Nabob* in the early 1770s, Parliament was just beginning to examine Lord Clive's administration of the East India Company, a preview of the

³⁸ Simon Trefman's biography remains the indispensable source for the details of Foote's fascinating life. Trefman, *Sam. Foote, Comedian* (New York: New York University Press, 1971).

Warren Hastings impeachment a decade later.³⁹ Thus, *The Nabob* follows a formula that allowed Foote his remarkable success over several decades, despite being largely frozen out of the patent theaters – mocking in a deeply sardonic voice whatever persons or issues happened to be before the metropolitan consciousness.

Yet *The Nabob*'s sendup of upstart EIC men also shares certain affinities with another kind of traditionalist critique of empire, one far more rigorous in its logic. There was perhaps no more vociferous opponent of company rule in the latter half of the eighteenth century than Edmund Burke, who in the 1780s and 1790s combined a personal crusade against Hastings, passionately advocating on behalf of the company's Indian subjects, with bitter denunciations of the French Revolution. Jennifer Pitts's brilliant account of the origins of liberal imperialism has gone a great length toward resolving the contradictions inherent in Burke's thinking, sketching a portrait of Burke not as a knee-jerk proto-conservative but as a nuanced universalist whose universalism incorporated local difference as vital.⁴⁰ That is not to say that Foote appears to give much thought to, for instance, the rectitude of Bengali institutions for Bengal, but there is strong commonality between Burke's darkest fears about the EIC and Foote's portrait of the nabobs. For Lady Oldham, the greatest threat that Sir Matthew (who left London a Shoreditch apprentice) represents is the vitiation of the landed British gentleman. In her imagination, this figure was the embodiment of a Tory (or Old Whig) version of masculine authority, in whose

³⁹ For the historical circumstances of *The Nabob*'s composition, see *ibid.*, 203-208.

⁴⁰ "Burke did not, as a typical caricature has it, fetishize the organic national community. Rather, he was a thinker attuned to the ways in which nations are constructed and can and must be reconstructed in response to national developments: conquests, most dramatically, in his own age. British nationalist sentiment, and the municipal morality from which it sprang, were, in Burke's view, the source of much of Britain's oppressive and unjust behavior in its imperial history. The alternative that emerges in his writings is universalism as an enlarged mentality, resting on particularist affections but attentive to the ways such affections can slip into exclusion. The right sort of affection for one's own is in fact essential for the humanitarianism Burke sought" (Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, 97).

person were blended moderation, family honor, and strong, local, affective bonds. Lamenting that the contemporary world has necessitated extravagances that opened her husband, Sir John Oldham, up to Sir Matthew's financial scheming, Lady Oldham contrasts Sir John's current state with the happy past of his predecessors:

L. Old. I suppose you consider yourself as sprung from a family at least as ancient as any in the country you live in?

Sir John. That I fancy will not be denied.

L. Old. Nor was it, I fancy, dishonoured by an alliance with mine?

Sir John. My Lady, the very reverse.

L. Old. You succeeded, Sir, to a patrimony, which though the liberal and hospitable spirit of your predecessors would not suffer to encrease, yet their prudence took care should never be diminished?

Sir John. True.

L. Old. From the public and private virtues of your ancestors, the inhabitants of the neighbouring borough thought their best and dearest interests in no hands so secure as in theirs?

Sir John. Right.

L. Old. Nor till lately were they so tainted by the fashion of the times, as to adopt the egregious absurdity, That to be faithfully served and protected above, it was necessary to be largely bribed and corrupted below? (*Nabob* 2-3)

Broadly speaking, there are two main thrusts to Burke's critique of the East India Company's empire. The first is the trampling of local institutions and traditions under the hegemonic (and uncomprehending) rule of foreigners – a logic that sets Burke very much at odds with the coming

liberal imperialism of the nineteenth century. The second was that, in assuming the mantle of despotism abroad, the character of Britain itself was put at risk.⁴¹ This is indeed the central conceit of *The Nabob*, which the class-obsessed Lady Oldham voices at the farce's outset.

The tension between the beneficent old order in danger of collapse and the corrupted new order sailing home in the Company's ships is dramatized in the opposition between the Oldham men and Sir Matthew. Sir John and Lady Oldham are, of course, not immune to the farce's lampoonery (this is Foote, after all). At certain points, their surname conveys a sense of decay, or a weakness stemming from their remaining behind the times. For instance, the snobbery of Lady Oldham, who is a perspicacious reader of Sir Matthew's character, threatens to open the family even further to the nabob's schemes, since her disdain for merchants causes her to initially reject the wisdom and aid of her brother-in-law, Thomas Oldham. When Sir John suggests that Thomas may be able to see a way out of their indebtedness to Sir Matthew, Lady Oldham responds, "there is a nicety, a delicacy, an elevation of sentiment, in this case, which people who have narrowed their notions with commerce, and considered during the course of their lives interest alone, will scarce comprehend" (*Nabob* 5). For her, making one's living in the City is fit only for "the younger shoots of a family" (*Nabob* 6), the business of second sons who must always remain in subordinate positions according to the ancient system of aristocratic patriarchy. This was a common enough conceit on the Restoration stage (where so many comedies turned on the chastisement of arrogant cits by rakish gentlemen) – but Lady Oldham's world is not that of the 1670s. However absurd the foppish and despotic Sir Matthew may appear, the danger he poses to the family is very real, and Lady Oldham's contempt for capital

⁴¹ In addition to Pitts' indispensable account, Robert Travers gives a concise and helpful overview of the substance of Burke's opposition to Hastings' government. Travers, *Ideology and Empire*, 214-223.

threatens to undercut their chances of prevailing against him before the play's main action even commences.

Yet agedness has another significance in the farce, according both to Lady Oldham's and to the play's understanding of gentlemanly authority. Recall the antiquity of the family that she uses in her attempt to chide Sir John into action. He is "sprung from a family at least as ancient as any in the country." He is reminded of the "public and private virtues of your ancestors," traits which simultaneously endeared the local peasantry to the Oldham patriarchs and legitimated their benevolent rule. It is not merely to shame Sir John with comparison to the steady and moderate governance of his ancestors that Lady Oldham recounts these facts. Rather, the antiquity of his family is a central criterion of Sir John's aristocratic masculinity. His authority is coextensive with his name and with his estate, his history and character immediately legible to all. And although the play does work to revise somewhat this premodern version of manliness when it puts forward Thomas and his son as the wise, solvent, and able saviors of Sophy and the family honor, this residual, iconic account of patriarchal identity nonetheless reverberates throughout.

For the Oldham's patriarchy – landed and founded upon an ancient title – directly opposes Sir Matthew's assumed gentlemanliness, which registers as faulty precisely because of its acquired nature. Hailing from an aristocratic family, Thomas Oldham is able to emerge morally and characterologically intact from the sphere of imperial commerce – his virtue perhaps rendered even more robust in the process. His position at the play's end as the true guardian of British masculine rectitude thus appears a relatively minor revision of Lady Oldham's account of proper gentlemanliness. A Shoreditch tradesman, Sir Matthew's acquisition of imperial capital renders him at once powerful and dangerously defective because it imparts a chameleon-like

upward mobility. An acquaintance of Sir Matthew's pre-India days delivers perhaps the play's most damning indictment of the nabob:

Putty. No! What, then, mayhap you ben't Mat Mite, son of John and Margery Mite, at the Sow and Sausage in St. Mary Axe, that took the tarts from the man in Pye-corner, and was sent beyond sea, for fear worse should come on it?

Mite. You see, Mr. Putty, the glazier, if that is your name and profession, you are entirely out in this matter; so you need not repeat your visits to me. [*Exit.*]

Putty. Now here's a pretty purse-proud son or a—who, forsooth, because he is grown great by robbing the heathens, won't own an old friend and acquaintance, and one too of the livery beside! Dammee, the great Turk himself need not be ashamed to shake hands with a citizen! "Mr. Putty the glazier!" well, what a pox am I the better for you? I'll be sworn our company has made more money by a single election at Brentford, than by all his exploits put together. (*Nabob* 59-60)

Sir Matthew's acquired snobbery comes close to mirroring Lady Oldham's own class prejudices, although his could also reflect an instinct of self-preservation. His project of installing himself at the very heart of metropolitan political and social power (and to be taken for a gentleman) would very likely suffer if the facts of his origins were widely acknowledged. But this ability to assume a new character enabled by the vast wealth he has acquired in imperial venture and malpractice does appear to be the most ominous and deviant aspect of Sir Matthew, as far as Foote's farce is concerned. The nabob's capital threatens to sweep away all before it, attacking the very foundations of existing forms of aristocratic manliness. Antiquity of family, longstanding claims

to real property, consanguinity, and historical continuity could very well become meaningless in the imperial world.⁴²

Siraj Ahmed downplays the newness of the threat the nabobs are supposed to represent within the play. In a book that discounts the importance of capitalism to the rise of European empire, Ahmed argues (largely correctly) that the Second British Empire instead rested upon the structures of monopoly commerce in ways that suggest a logic of despotism (opposing the ideologies of capital) already in operation. Furthermore, he contends that the main point of *The Nabob* is alluded to in Putty's parting comment quoted above.⁴³ It is not that participation in the imperial project that threatens to corrupt Britain in the return of the nabobs. It is, rather, that the corrupted nabobs expose the corruption already extant in the heart of the British metropole. Ahmed focuses on one scene that concerns the buying of political offices and rapacity of EIC agents:

Touchit. ...Why, here are a body of merchants that beg to be admitted as friends, and take possession of a small spot in a country, and carry on a beneficial commerce with the inoffensive and innocent people, to which they kindly give their consent.

Mayor. Don't you think now that is very civil of them?

⁴² Real property as a foundation of civic engagement and political authority remained a widely shared concept among the British elite, even those most actively engaged in the production of mobile imperial capital. As Guha's famous history of the Permanent Settlement in Bengal (in the making for several decades but finally adopted under Lord Cornwallis's governorship in the 1790s) makes clear, after the Battle of Palashi gave the EIC true sovereignty and especially after the famine of 1770, many in the Company began to believe imposing an English-style squirearchy on the Bengali countryside was vital to the long-term profitability of the monopoly and to the long-term stability of the colony. This led the EIC to declare the *zamindari*, local revenue officials under the Mughal Empire, to be large landholders, which, historically, they generally had never been. The settlement would have disastrous effects in the nineteenth century. See Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal*.

⁴³ Ahmed *The Stillbirth of Capital*, 96.

Touchit. Doubtless. Upon which, Mr. Mayor, we cunningly encroach, and fortify by little and by little, till at length, we growing too strong for the natives, we turn them out of their lands, and take possession of their money and jewels.

Mayor. And don't you think, Master Touchit, that is a little uncivil in us?

Touchit. Oh, nothing at all: These people are but little better than Tartars or Turks.

Mayor. No, no, Master Touchit; just the reverse; it is *they* have caught the Tartars in us. (*Nabob* 39-40)

The idea that the realities of empire would call forth political demons in Europeans abroad is a persistent one throughout the long eighteenth century (recall the absolutism of Robinson Crusoe). And Ahmed is certainly right to identify the main thrust of Foote's mockery as not only aimed at EIC nabobs but also at metropolitan society. Whereas Grainger envisioned imperial masculinity educated abroad as a salve repairing a declining Britain, here the nabobs' deviancy worsens a moral and ethical disease already festering in metropolitan man.

This does not mean *The Nabob* sees little new in the specific threat represented by Sir Matthew and company. That Foote implies the seeds of corruption and degradation were already present in British manhood and awaited only the imperial encounter (figured both as lucre and as contact with an alien other) does not constitute a wholesale attack on iconic forms of British masculinity. And, in fact, Foote postulates the virtuous merchant as a potential remedy to the dissipated nabob, incorporating the benevolent patriarchy Lady Oldham associates with premodern squires and a capacity to exist and thrive in the modern world. Indeed, there is some commonality between Thomas Oldham's right-thinking moderation and that of Grainger's planter, although (crucially) Thomas's complicity in imperial gain is hidden or disavowed. What

differentiates the proper modern man from the nabob, Foote's play suggests, is the faulty pedagogy the nabob encounters in the colony and the tremendous power (via obscene quantities of mobile capital) he acquires there to bring those lessons to the metropole. The inchoate mess of unformed manhood may be the same in boys in the United Kingdom or in the empire, but the former are (or should be) subject to the guiding strictures of British society. As Thomas warns Sophy, "these new gentlemen, who from the caprice of Fortune, and a strange chain of events, have acquired immoderate wealth, and rose to uncontrolled power abroad, find it difficult to descend from their dignity, and admit of any equal at home" (*Nabob* 18).⁴⁴

However, as I have indicated, while the play describes in shadowy detail the nabob's abuses overseas, and while Sir Matthew's attempts to coerce Sophy into marriage attest to his despotic impulses, Foote expends at least as much comedic energy sketching Sir Matthew as a foppish, class-morphing fool. Before we ever meet him, we observe servants Janus and Conserve recounting their exploits cheating masters and insulting gentlemen visitors with impunity, giving a sense of the old aristocratic world turned topsy-turvy. Our first true encounter with Sir Matthew finds him learning how to play cards from a waiter:

Mite. So that, perhaps, in a couple of months, I shall be able to tap, flirt, stamp, dribble, and whirl, with any man in the club?

Waiter. As your honour has a genius, you will make a wonderful progress, no doubt: But these nice matters are not got in a moment; there must be parts, as well as practice, your honour.

Mite. What! parts for the performance of this?

⁴⁴ Mehta notes how the view of EIC nabobs as unruly children reverses rather intentionally a standard trope of liberal imperialism – that of the native child/subject requiring the civilizing tutelage of the enlightened European patriarch. See Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*, 32-33 especially.

Waiter. This? Why, there's Sir Christopher Clumsey, in the whole losing his fortune, (and I believe he was near a twelvemonth about it) never once threw, paid, or received, with one atom of grace.

Mite. He must have been a dull devil, indeed.

Waiter. A mere dunce! got no credit by losing his money; was ruined without the least reputation.

Mite. Perhaps so. Well, but Dick, as to the oaths and phrases that are most in use at the club? (*Nabob* 28-29)

Sir Matthew's assumption of aristocratic masculinity is defective along multiple axes. Most glaringly, the character he is eager to affect is that of a dissipated rake, a type who (by the 1770s) had virtually none of the charm and heroism left with which he once swaggered through the comedies of George Etherege. But his failure is more serious still, for, despite his acquired title and massive fortune, he has no real claim to even this debased form of aristocratic manhood. Instead, Sir Matthew, a son of London's lower classes, must learn the forms of upper-class debauchery from a servant. The result, the farce strongly implies, is a kind of grotesque, emasculated manliness, bringing together the powerful influence of ill-gotten capital with a threatening class-ascendance – and with a brand of absurd, foppish foolishness.

The solution to the problem represented by these defective, effeminized men of empire, so the farce posits, lies with men like Thomas and his son, whose virtue and self-governance bridges the older logics of patriarchy and consanguinity and the new order of finance capital. This classist-tinged balancing act to accommodate modernity is deeply traditionalist in a way, and it is in continuity with a long eighteenth-century obsession (seen, for instance, in *Tom Jones*) of finding avenues to incorporate title and birth into the reformed gentleman's claim for agency

while simultaneously rejecting the importance of those categories. But Foote, like Grainger, also departs from the vein of Fielding and Smollett by locating the reformed gentleman's theater of action definitively in the spheres of empire and metropole. It is, after all, the merchant brother who saves the family honor that the first-born son could not, and Thomas is allowed to deliver the play's parting moral: "For, however praiseworthy the spirit of adventure may be, whoever keeps his post, and does his duty at home, will be found to render his country best service at last!" (*Nabob* 71). That last line, calling on young men of capital to mind to Britain first, is, of course, increasingly untenable. As Ahmed has noted, and as Foote's metropolitan audience was certainly aware, metropolitan trade was becoming inextricably linked to colonial finance. But that is largely the story we have been tracing all along. The realities of imperial modernity were felt as both incredibly enticing and as a substantial threat to historic ways by a host of writers in the period. And, repeatedly, the contest between residual and emergent was registered and processed through reformulating what it meant to be a gentleman and through exploring the pedagogy necessary for producing a gentleman. For Grainger, transporting an Old World ideal of squirearchy to the New World seemed to offer a solution to the unique problems of imperial rule and as a way of reinvigorating the metropole itself. The work of empire has an almost diametrically opposed function in Foote's play, and yet Foote ends up advocating the metropolitan merchant as the new icon of virtuous masculinity. Neither vision is fully satisfactory however, as the upheavals of empire perpetually overwhelm the received forms and traditions from which both writers draw.

Coda: Taking stock

A central claim of this dissertation has been that the masculine types repeatedly deployed in eighteenth-century literature as symbols of authorized masculine authority often betray serious anxieties about their meaning and stability. It is not only the subaltern or subversive figures of the period that point to challenges and limitations inherent in the hegemony of Whig patriarchy. Rather, the very icons that attempted to convey and structure imperial hegemony often signal the epistemic cracks and fissures running just below the surface. Grainger's planter attempts to work through these problems in defining the sociopolitical role of the Caribbean patriarch through the lens of his estate. The most despotic impulses of premodern, aristocratic masculinity are present, and they are indeed essential to the slave system the planter inhabits. Grainger tries to temper these impulses by imaging the tyrannical patriarch as the ideal Whig man – virtuous, kindly, and industrious. Moreover, his ideological and symbolic linkage with the squirearchy of the English countryside gives a false sense of timelessness – continuity with a mythic past – to his position within the empire, the icon of the well-managed estate working to diffuse the new and unsettling import plantation's ideology of property.

This project is of course unwieldy and at several points appears on the verge of collapsing entirely. Meanwhile, Foote's nabob, with his unabashed reliance on stolen colonial capital for the power he very nearly uses to upset the entire logic of metropolitan upper-class society, sets about demolishing the squierarchical model once and for all. The ease with which he deploys his money to buy his way into the metropole's highest echelons, into Westminster, and almost into the Oldham family itself suggests both the hypocrisy of that elite and its enervation. And whereas Grainger (dubiously) asserted the slave-owning planter-patriarch as the moral savior of British masculinity – the strength of mind, body, and spirit needed to prosper in

the colonial wilderness becoming an example for all – Foote turns this schema on its head. *The Nabob* suggests that imperial wealth had the potential to fatally undermine masculine authority at home. Hardly a symbol of rectitude and enlightenment abroad, the aristocratic gentleman for Foote is powerless to stop the worst practices of empire from taking root at home – if he even cared to try.

While Foote's farce contains perhaps the most pessimistic and blatantly stated critique of British imperial masculinity in the period, and while the ever-increasing volume of imperial capital and importance of imperial venture to the metropole was making the Fielding model of Whig manhood unsustainable even as a symbol, the enlightened squire as the telos of British gentlemanliness would remain an abiding theme in literature for some time. In my final chapter, I turn to the national tale of the Regency to examine how Scottish and Irish authors fixated upon the country gentleman as an anchor of union. On the one hand, the social position of the Scottish laird or Irish landowner (provided he could be convinced to abandon his habitual absenteeism) helped connect Celtic fringe and newly constituted nation, bridging the distance between Edinburgh or Dublin and London both figuratively and literally. For one thing, a seat in the Lords or Commons offered a real, political voice to his locality. But moreover, his class position and English education imbue this patriarch with a hybrid identity that unified nations, particularly when married (as he generally was in the end) to a highly gaelicized heroine. On the other hand, his commitment to his estate, and most especially to the tenants of his estate, keeps alive a sense of historical Scottishness or Irishness – a patriarchalism that evokes national mythologies of devoted chieftains and loyal clansmen. In the near-colonial context of Ireland and Scotland, by reaching backward in time to a romanticized, premodern past, the squire connected union with national pasts and models of authority. Reformed as the cosmopolitan,

virtuous, right-feeling gentleman of modernity, cleansed of his absolutist connotations, he could help shepherd Celtic peripheries into full partners in union. Thinking through why Whig squirearchy was such an attractive conceptual linchpin for authors as divergent as Sir Walter Scott, Maria Edgeworth, and Sydney Owenson gives us a better understanding of the sociopolitical tensions, philosophical stakes, and literary questions of the imperial age as that age was coming into maturity.

CHAPTER 4

SQUIREARCHY AND UNION: THE COUNTRY PATRIARCHS OF OWENSON, EDGEWORTH, AND SCOTT

I would call the ‘archaic’ that which is wholly recognized as an element of the past, to be observed, to be examined, or even on occasion to be consciously ‘revived’, in a deliberately specializing way. What I mean by the ‘residual’ is very different. The residual, by definition, has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present.

— Williams, *Marxism and Literature*¹

When I reached the Hall, the closed doors and windows, the grass-grown pavement, the courts, which were now so silent, presented a strong contrast to the gay and bustling scene I had so often seen them exhibit, when the merry hunters were going forth to their morning sport, or returning to the daily festival. The joyous bark of the foxhounds as they were uncoupled, the cries of the huntsman, the clang of the horses’ hoofs, the loud laugh of the old knight at the head of his strong and numerous descendants, were all silenced now and for ever.

— Scott, *Rob Roy*²

Throughout much of eighteenth-century British literature, the figure of the country patriarch carried (or, really, was newly infused with) an historical authority and mythic cultural symbolism that could, in the manner of a Squire Jones or Laird Random, be reformed to the

¹ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 122.

² Sir Walter Scott, *Rob Roy*, ed. Ian Duncan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 433. References are to this edition.

paths of moderation and virtue. Nevertheless, the real-world English squire faced mounting pressures from an economic system and global imperial theater that were fast eclipsing the country seat as a coherent foundation of the sociopolitical order.³ And these transformations register in the manifold anxieties that pervade his constellation of derived literary typologies. I have argued from the outset that iterations of authorized masculinity across the period are, to a large degree, always already residual (in Raymond Williams's sense of that term). For a broad range of writers working in an era running from the beginnings of Georgian Britain to the eve of industrialization, the affective, social, and political structures of premodern patriarchy held a tremendous influence over the literary imagination and over literary possibilities, even as the social and political paradigms in which that patriarchy took root were radically shifting. However, the multi-directionality in which the Whig squire is pulled – premodern and modern, residual and emergent, absolutist and republican – makes the patriarchal fantasy he anchors difficult (and ultimately impossible) to sustain. Instability inheres in the grafting together of the old aristocratic order and the modern imperial gentleman, and we repeatedly encounter icons of masculine authority fracturing under their own conceptual weight, with the Whig gentleman morphing into the Tory tyrant, or threatened by his reappearance.

But even as the ubiquity of the country gentleman at the center of the British-imperial world was being increasingly challenged by metropolitan and colonial realities, he features prominently in one important category of early-nineteenth-century fiction: the national tale and literatures of union. For a range of Scottish and Irish writers exploring the meaning of an emerging British identity – as well as their countries' positions within a United Kingdom and its

³ Obviously, this is not to argue that the country gentleman was about to be excised from British fiction. The Brontës, Trollope, Evelyn Waugh in the twentieth century – even Dickens, the iconic novelist of industrial London – would return repeatedly to the gentry and rural aristocracy, although often depicting them as moldering ruins of a fading order.

empire – reassessing, reforming, and redeploying the country gentleman offered a capacious framework for this exploration.⁴ My final chapter takes up representations of squirearchy in the near-colonial spaces of the Celtic periphery through the lens of three famous writers with divergent backgrounds, politics, and aims. In Sydney Owenson’s *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806), Maria Edgeworth’s *The Absentee* (1814), and Sir Walter Scott’s *Rob Roy* (1817), we find the squire and his estate as the sites through which historical trauma can be acknowledged and assuaged and local identities mediated in a British present. And indeed, especially in Edgeworth’s novel but also in Owenson’s and Scott’s, we encounter an aggressively pragmatic aspect to this revision and rehabilitation of gentlemanliness; reforming the young squire, bringing him to love his country (native or adoptive) and his dependents, appears to go hand-in-hand with the project of reforming English-Irish-Scottish relations themselves. The Anglo-Irish landowner, the Scottish lord, or even the Highland brigand fulfill a crucial and *realpolitik* function that goes beyond symbolism.⁵ Yet even while squirearchy forms the conceptual basis of the national tale, all three novels in focus here paradoxically appear acutely cognizant of squirearchy’s limited capacity to fully effect transnational reconciliation or to fully account for modernity. Therefore, this chapter works toward a theory of union squirearchy that will help to

⁴ Like the Scottish 1707 Act of Union before it, the 1800 Act of Union abolished the Dublin parliament and gave Ireland direct representation at Westminster, although the franchise was only extended to Protestant Irish. Despite Scotland and England’s formal unification a century previous to the union with Ireland, the 1700s were a frequently contentious time between the countries (with two Jacobite risings, English hostility towards Scots coming south to seek their fortunes, and Scottish resentment at the loss of historic institutions and freedoms). Thus, the Regency – thanks in no small part to the foreign, existential threat represented by Napoleon – saw a renewed focus by prominent, unionist Scots to redouble efforts at intranational amity. These efforts culminated in George IV’s visit to Edinburgh in 1822, an event choreographed by Scott. See Colley, *Britons*, 235 and 322 especially.

⁵ For a discussion of Anglo-Irish absenteeism and its centrality to discourses on the problems facing Ireland in the early union, see Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 116-117.

explicate why its particular masculine typology remained so appealing at this moment and also how it encodes the anxieties and ambivalences contained within the concept.

The plot of the national tales in focus here (or rather, two national tales and one historical novel) follows an arc so common in the period and genre as to be one of its virtual template.⁶ A disaffected hero – English either by birth or by education – begins the novel prejudiced in favor of the metropole against the Celtic exterior. Some event or misdeed forces him to Ireland or Scotland, where he comes to correct his previous opinions and fall in love with the country, invariably through powerful sexual attraction to a Celtic heroine. His developing affection (for woman and for country) occurs alongside a developing moral education, so that by the novel's inevitable happy ending in a marriage that symbolizes the union itself, he is fit to serve as the devoted and benevolent patriarch. The fractious national past (and threatening, Gaelicized femininity) are brought to calm and lasting resolution in the restored squirearchical hall in west-country Ireland, or the Scottish Borders, or Northumberland, or wherever the case may be. This formula reached perhaps the pinnacle of its critical reception in Scott's *Waverley* (1814), although Scott was clearly drawing on writers like Edgeworth and Owenson, whose work he

⁶ The origins of the historical novel out of the national tale, and the subsequent coevolution of the two forms, have been well charted in recent years. Ina Ferris draws a sharp distinction between Scott's project and those of Owenson and Edgeworth by arguing that Scott's novels present a much more nuanced account of cultural difference (an almost Bakhtinian dialogic interaction) and feel the weight of historical circumstances in their broadest strokes. In contrast, national tales depend "less on the potentially historical notion of cultural difference than on the antihistorical notion of essential individuality and transcendent emotion underpinning the tradition of sensibility and sentiment." Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 128. Katie Trumpener's *Bardic Nationalism* allows for rather more complexity to national tales, but she also argues that national texts like those of Owenson and Edgeworth treat locality as essentialist and concrete in a way Scott does not: "...from *Waverley* onward, the historical novel shows the collapse and transfiguration of place, as an annalistic accretion of time within the stability of place gives way to the phenomenological development of places." Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 141.

much admired and whose novelistic careers preceded his own. And it is the formula *The Wild Irish Girl* and *The Absentee* both follow. *Rob Roy* departs from this tried and tested pattern to a degree, but it does so, as I shall argue below, in ways that highlight the contradictions implicit in union squirearchy throughout the genre and, consequently, the instability of union itself.⁷

Extant criticism has largely underplayed the fear of conceptual failure that haunts early unionist novels, even as many accounts have explored the myriad tensions these novels seek to assuage. I argue that if we more fully account for this fear, we emerge with a stronger sense of how the paradoxes contained within Whig imperial ideology and understandings of masculine authority unsettle literatures of imperial modernity. Indeed, whether the national-tale genre's central masculine type can accomplish the sociopolitical work he sets out to accomplish is a question that depends upon a complicated act of balancing past and present – an enormous task even in the most optimistic of national fictions. On the one hand, the union squire governs an highly traditional structure – more retrograde even than Crusoe's island, where flirtations with divine-right patriarchalism nevertheless require an encounter with a wholly new and alien space in order to manifest as a possibility. Although Owenson and Edgeworth's politics and literary style diverge sharply, *The Wild Irish Girl* and *The Absentee* both present a reconstituted patriarchalism as timeless order restored. The inhabitants of the principality of Inismore or the Clonbrony estate may as well exist hundreds of years in the past, as their world is coextensive with the ancient estate itself, and their lord as the fount of justice and beneficence. Reforming the young gentleman is thus very much a project of restoration and of setting to ancient right a

⁷ These tensions continue to reverberate in the present day. Though Yes Scotland ultimately lost the 18 September 2014 referendum on independence by 10 percent of the vote, the separationist Scottish National Party dominates the Holyrood parliament, and the SNP virtually obliterated Scottish Labour in the Westminster elections of 2015. Whether this more strongly reflects solidifying nationalist sentiment above the Tweed or disaffection with Labour's rightward drift since Tony Blair's premiership remains to be seen.

modern wrong (or of at least making the terms of his colonial rule more palatable by bringing him to acknowledge the voices and histories of the colonized). At the same time, however, the imperial world outside the estate represents an undeniable force directly impacting local life while also existing well beyond the control of the Irish tenant. The unionist ideology that the mature country gentleman embodies aims at the creation of a modern, imperial nation-state that sits sharply at odds with the underpinnings of the gentleman's assumed identity and the sociopolitical order he governs. Thus, even as he steps into the role of ancient patriarch, the Irish squire is being asked to adopt the cosmopolitan identity of the modern gentleman, serving as feudal lord and citizen of the world simultaneously. Moreover, successfully fulfilling the function for which he is designed demands that he assume a manner of hybridity – a British, not Irish, subjecthood. These are, after all, not simply stories of a romanticized, local past (although they are that as well) but of an emergent empire.

In *Waverley*, Scott had attempted to solve this problematic identity (that is, the Scottish version of these tensions) through an intricately crafted mediation of history.⁸ There, a painful past and extinct possibilities of national identity are evacuated of their immediate danger, transmuted into a received, shared heritage, and incorporated into united Britain in the marriage of Edward Waverley and Rose Bradwardine.⁹ *Rob Roy* – on the whole a much less tidy, and

⁸ For a lucid account of this mediation at the level of the country estate, see Wolfram Schmidgen, "Picturing Property: *Waverley* and the Common Law," *Studies in the Novel* 29.2 (Summer 1997): 191-213.

⁹ As Ian Duncan contends, *Waverley*'s resolution is nowhere near as seamless as the novel's fronted position would have it. "Romance no longer signifies illusion, a state of false consciousness – a naive substitution for real history – but illusion sustained in self-knowledge: a play of sensibility that marks off a private space at the limits of real history. Thus it is not enough for us to stop at 'death', reinforcing its metaphysical boundary of negation: we have to read the content of that death, here in Scott the terrible abstractions of historical process and politics. For romance also confirms, in its authentic mood of an intimate elegiac pathos, the appropriation of other historical lives for our own. Scott's narratives recount again and again

because of that, in some ways a more beguiling novel – disclaims such a blithesome conceit. In contrast to the noble Highland clansmen of Scott’s first novel, who register as icons of an alluring, fearsome, and, crucially, extinct masculinity, *Rob Roy*’s Highlanders have no such stench of death or tragedy hanging about them. As Ian Duncan has noted, the novel’s wild northern men stubbornly refuse the whole romanticizing project, remaining inhabitants of an unincorporable space that lives on synchronic to British modernity itself.¹⁰ Additionally, the novel comes close to supplanting the squire figure as the pinnacle of authorized British masculinity. The dissenting merchant, William Osbaldistone, the protagonist’s father, is, after all, presented as the live agent of historical action, made heroic in his own right, while his Jacobitical brother, Sir Hildebrand, is a second-coming of Squire Western, only rendered as (if possible) more absurd.¹¹ Indeed, Duncan argues that, rather than the romanticized Highland

that aesthetic property as the last and absolute theft: a sublimation that comprehends the violence of history, all the deaths that have produced us, now reading.” Duncan, *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel: The Gothic, Scott, Dickens* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 92.

¹⁰ This, for Duncan, is where anthropology (and its concept of the “primitive”) yields to history. “Scott uncouples the identification of Jacobitism with Highland culture and blocks both terms from attaining a synechdoical equivalence with ‘Scotland.’ The uncoupling makes possible the framing of a new discursive category: the primitive. It is new in that Scott separates the primitive from the past as the product of a linear, teleological historicism, although only after he has evoked the past as a discursive stage through which his narrative may activate the primitive and its uncanny contemporaneity.” Duncan, *Scott’s Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 104.

¹¹ While on one level William Osbaldistone appears ready to recommend a life dedicated to commerce in much the same terms as Crusoe’s father did (that is, as a steady and stable path to domestic tranquility), the novel early on presents capitalism as the mode of modern adventure: “Love of his profession was the motive which he chose should be most ostensible, when he urged me to tread the same path; but he had others with which I only became acquainted at a later period. Impetuous in his schemes, as well as skilful and daring, each new adventure, when successful, became at once the incentive, and furnished the means, for farther speculation. It seemed to be necessary to him, as to an ambitious conqueror, to push on from achievement to achievement, without stopping to secure, far less to enjoy, the acquisitions which he made....he resembled a sailor, accustomed to brave the billows and the foe, whose confidence rises on the eve of tempest or of battle” (Scott, *Rob Roy*, 70).

chieftain who meets his end at the scaffold in *Waverley*, it is the buffoonish squire who seems destined for extinction, rating Osbaldistone Hall and its denizens (excluding Die Vernon) as an historical and narratological dead end.¹²

However, I want to suggest that Sir Hildebrand and his sons have a more serious function than simply to serve as illustrations of a gentlemanly agency no longer operative or possible. For while they certainly present as impossibly obsolete, and often risible in their habits, beliefs, and customs, Osbaldistone Hall possesses a tremendous pull on the protagonist's psyche. We must remember that, while the novel's central theme (much like *Robinson Crusoe*) is of a young man brought back to the path of hard work and sober pragmatism by his adventures and misdeeds, *Rob Roy* does not end in the Osbaldistones' City of London counting house. Instead, it ends with Frank returning to the desolate hall to take possession of an inheritance, one imbued with reverberations of loss and impossibility but one that nonetheless holds center stage.¹³ *Rob Roy* acknowledges that the old patriarchalism and the world it anchored have no place in imperial modernity, but it cannot shake them from its fantasies of masculine agency either. The foreclosure of this world is felt deeply, and it is felt as profound loss.

This chapter seeks to explicate the conceptual disjunction arising from the role the union squire was deployed to fill and the dangerous and increasingly problematic foundations of the masculine authority he represented. The commonalities across the range of texts I analyze underscores both the centrality of squirearchy to unionist literary imaginings in this tumultuous

¹² Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, 109.

¹³ Thus, the signification of the gentleman's inheritance is much less certain in *Rob Roy* than in Scott's 1815 novel *Guy Mannering*. In the earlier novel, the eventual restoration of Harry Bartram (kidnapped as a young child) to the lairdship of Ellangowan orients the plot from the start. Indeed, much as in *Roderick Random*, we can read Bartram's participation in empire (via the army) as a necessary pedagogical course for becoming a mature gentleman. See Scott, *Guy Mannering*, ed. P. D. Garside (New York: Penguin Classics, 2003).

period and the conceptual strain the fantasy of a traditionalist country patriarchy faced. Although *The Wild Irish Girl* appears to have the most faith in the stability of its happy domestic resolution, even this early national tale is deeply aware of the affective limits of its patriarch's power, and its ending is hyperlocalized to the point of retreating from the sphere of national politics altogether. Moreover, the decayed but alluring old-model patriarchy represented by the Prince of Inismore prefigures that same problematic construction of masculine identity that irrupts within *Rob Roy*. While Edgeworth's *The Absentee* comes the closest to offering a model of praxis for effecting lasting union, it nonetheless registers a profound ambivalence toward the possibility of a reformed Anglo-Irish ascendancy. The very patriarchal command that allows the goodhearted Lord Colambre to so easily ameliorate the dire conditions of his family's tenants is also highly capricious, a fact at which the novel is forced to hint. Finally, I will close with *Rob Roy*, perhaps Scott's most anxious novel, where the union squire is explicitly unsettled throughout.

The Wild Irish Girl

As we shall see, Owenson – like Edgeworth and Scott – is preoccupied by concerns over the efficacy (and desirability) of squirearchy, and the possibility of the premodern tyrant reemerging in the modern gentleman is a persistent counter-theme. In fact, I argue that such fears may be very much her point. But these anxieties are an unsettling substratum to a novel that initially appears to urgently advance a path to national reform through individual, affective interaction. On its face, *The Wild Irish Girl* presents the problem of transnational reconciliation – of addressing the dire straits of Ireland's Catholic peasantry and articulating Ireland's place in the new union – as a problem of sentiment and personal education. Even though Owenson

challenges the prejudices of England and of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, the framework her novel envisions for ruling a subject Ireland is deeply traditional. The end of the novel is a reiteration of Anglo-Irish patriarchy, albeit one headed by a reformed, young patriarch, who has been taught to love Ireland by loving the “Princess” Glorvina, the highly eroticized embodiment of Celtic femininity and Ireland itself. With the marriage of English hero and dispossessed Irish noblewoman, historic animosities are buried, historic wrongs corrected, and the abject state of the tenantry much improved now that their colonial lord is here to stay. He is glued to his land through his desire for his Irish wife, and, in short, the novel superficially suggests that all is now well. As Ina Ferris puts it, Owenson had authored the “paradigmatic” national tale, and a saccharine form it can indeed at first appear to the modern eye – enormous issues and centuries of conflict reduced to the stuff of romance and fairy tale.¹⁴

Recent criticism has helped illuminate the serious problematics beneath this surface simplicity. Feminist readings have shown the anxiety with which Owenson’s hero silences a threatening, Celtic womanhood as he asserts his own patriarchal agency at the novel’s end.¹⁵

¹⁴ Ferris, *The Romantic National Tale and the Question of Ireland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 46. Ferris, of course, goes a long way toward correcting this lasting urge to dismiss Owenson as trivial. Prior to the burst of interest in Irish and Scottish nationalisms in the 1990s, *The Wild Irish Girl* had languished in obscurity for 150 years, generally viewed as reductive, essentializing, and, from a nationalist perspective, not nearly radical enough. But Ferris astutely keys us into moments in which the text undercuts the very essentialism it seems to advocate. For instance, Glorvina resolutely refuses the role of the enchanting pixie that Horatio insists upon: “*The Wild Irish Girl* may demand an intimate and quasi-bodily reading, as we will see, but this is not because it wants to intensify a mimetic illusion. Rather, it exploits the powers of romance to provoke a new English orientation toward the matter of Ireland: it is *position* that is at issue. In the act of advocacy that constitutes *The Wild Irish Girl*, Glorvina herself is best understood as a provocative figure, a self-conscious stylization shaped by an acute sense of historical crisis” (Ibid., 56).

¹⁵ Ferris does this well, not only in her account of Glorvina’s stubborn refusal of Horatio’s reductivist fantasy but also in noting the way subaltern female characters upset Horatio’s bid for command and self-command. Citing an early moment in which Horatio stumbles upon a spinning circle, Ferris writes, “Having gone for a look, Horatio is now himself subjected to an

Indeed, Julia Anne Miller reads the marriage plot prototypical of national tales as the ultimate act of colonization, inserting imperial politics directly into the domestic, and she notes that Owenson's heroine is only brought to a union with the English aristocrat under duress.¹⁶ In contrast, this chapter argues that the anxieties inherent in the project of union squirearchy are not merely outwardly directed toward a threatening Celtic other (more specifically, a Celtic, feminine other). For while the newly enlightened English patriarch fears the challenge to his authority that the Celtic heroine embodies, the novels of union in focus here are deeply ambivalent toward the sufficiency of their heroes to fulfill the political function for which they are deployed. No matter how refined or feminized their performance of gentlemanliness are, and no matter how insistently these gentlemen are depicted as enlightened patriarchs of the long-settled Whig order, they carry with them a violent prehistory that can never be fully buried or erased. Moreover, in advancing a reformed patriarchy as the key to effecting a benevolent English-Celtic hybrid administration of Britain's near-colonial space, these visions of union squirearchy rest upon an assumption that these novels acknowledge has been proven wrong – repeatedly. If the cement of a prosperous and happy political union is the strengthening of the affective structures binding patriarch to his colonial holdings and subjects, what assurance do those subjects have that these structures will not crumble as soon as the patriarch loses interest? And, even if Horatio M. or Lord Colambre do remain devoted rulers, how could such individuated experiences possibly serve as a pattern for a national settlement? After all, there can only be so many beautiful Irish princesses playing the harp by moonlight in ruined castles.

emasculating look, suddenly made aware of the existence of another world in which his usual (English, masculine) identity no longer quite sustains itself" (Ibid., 53).

¹⁶ Miller, "Acts of Union: Family Violence and National Courtship in Maria Edgeworth's *The Absentee* and Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl*," in *Border Crossings: Irish Women Writers and National Identities*, ed. Kathryn Kirkpatrick (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2000), 13-37.

As easy as it is for a modern reader to be put off by the mawkishness of *The Wild Irish Girl*, it is even easier to overlook how radical the text was in 1806. Whereas in the latter part of the nineteenth century (particularly after the Famine), the question of Irish nationalism split largely along religious lines, with disenfranchised Catholics making up the large majority of republicans, in the late eighteenth century, the loudest stirrings of discontent toward London came from within the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy. The founders of the United Irishmen, Wolfe Tone and Lord Edward Fitzgerald, were both liberal Protestants, and their revolt in 1798 owed as much or more to the American and French revolutions and annoyance at British meddling in the Ascendancy's affairs as it did to the plight of the Catholic peasantry.¹⁷ The rebellion was easily quelled, but it greatly frightened the British government, as it did more conservative elements of Anglo-Irish society. In the midst of its wars against Napoleon (indeed, the United Irishmen had counted on support from France in their bid to end British rule of Ireland), Westminster could ill afford the distraction of a restive colony just off its shores, or the loss of capital and manpower a successful rebellion would mean. The aftermath of the failed uprising brought about the 1800 Act of Union, which dissolved the Dublin parliament and removed the seat of political authority across the Irish Sea to the imperial metropole. In such a context, any celebration of Irish history or culture – and Owenson's florid romanticizing is certainly that – was a charged, potentially dangerous act, even if couched in terms that preserved colonial rule. Owenson's radical publisher, Sir Richard Phillips, initially declined to accept *The Wild Irish Girl* (although

¹⁷ Marilyn Butler's indispensable biography of Edgeworth has a helpful account of the United Irishmen rebellion and the connection between Edgeworth's father and the rebellion's leaders. See Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972). Owenson's father, the Irish actor Robert Owenson, knew Tone, and he had acted on stage with the famous nationalist hero in County Sligo in the 1780s. See Mary Campbell, *Lady Morgan: The Life and Times of Sydney Owenson* (London: Pandora, 1988), 28.

Owenson's threat of defection to a rival quickly brought him about), and Dublin Castle had soon compiled a file on her as a potential spy/provocateur.¹⁸

In this climate, it makes sense that Owenson would encode her most damning critiques of Anglo-Irish colonialism, and the patriarchalism undergirding it, behind a veneer of sanguine reconciliation. Katie Trumpener has described Owenson's career arc as moving from optimistic "didactic attempts to educate English readers" toward radical separatism later in her life.¹⁹ A robust skepticism toward both the possibility and the desirability of union is, I contend, already present in *The Wild Irish Girl*, and this skepticism forms a troubling substratum to the novel's ostensible project. That project does appear as a forceful attempt to seduce an English audience the way Horatio is himself seduced – to counter metropolitan chauvinistic assumptions through a catching exuberance for all things Irish. This is apparent from the very beginning of the novel, in how Owenson chooses to frame the stakes of Horatio's journey. For the narrative seeks to repair something wrong with England, or specifically, with English gentlemanliness itself. Sent by his father to their West-Country estates as a punishment and cure for his metropolitan dissipation, Horatio begins his journey sullen and dejected, but he finds his spirits reinvigorated as soon as he arrives on the Irish coast:

To confess the truth, I had so far suffered prejudice to get the start of unbiassed liberality, that I had almost assigned to these rude people scenes appropriately barbarous; and never was more pleasantly astonished, than when the morning's dawn gave to my view one of the most splendid spectacles in the scene of

¹⁸ See *ibid.*, 60-78 for a discussion of this period in Owenson's life.

¹⁹ Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, 145-146.

picturesque creation I had ever beheld, or indeed ever conceived; the bay of
Dublin.²⁰

Thus begins a process of captivation that transforms into passionate desire through the medium of the “wild” Irish princess, Glorvina.

Yet by the time Glorvina makes her appearance – or, more accurately, by the time Horatio makes it a point of climbing her tower in the dead of night to steal a glimpse of her – Horatio is already well advanced in amending his former antipathy and of diagnosing the source of Ireland’s woes. Having seen the wretched state of the Catholic tenantry on his long journey from Dublin, he is soon pained to discover his family’s complicity in their oppression. The M.s (Owenson gives us only the first letter of their surname) have become extravagantly wealthy off land they originally seized as Cromwellian invaders, but they have long neglected their Irish charges, leaving the administration of their holdings to cruel and avaricious agents. Horatio is immediately disgusted on meeting his father’s factor, Mr. Clendinning, whom he describes as the very form of an imperial despot:

It is certain, that the diminutive body of our worthy steward, is the abode of the transmigrated soul of some *West Indian* planter. I have been engaged these two days in listening to, and retributing those injuries his tyranny has inflicted, in spite of his rage, eloquence, and threats, none of which have been spared. The victims of his oppression haunt me in walks, fearful lest their complaints should come to the knowledge of this puissant *major domo*. (Owenson 34)

Characters like Clendinning serve an important function for the Anglo-Irish absentees, as they allow reform-minded novelists such as Owenson and Edgeworth a way of hinting at the effects

²⁰ Lady Morgan (Sydney Owenson), *The Wild Irish Girl*, ed. Kathryn Kirkpatrick (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 13-14. References are to this edition.

of neglectful patriarchy while absolving the ruling class of direct responsibility for the woes of their tenants. The ignorance of the well-meaning but weak or mislead lord of the manor is a common theme in the national-tale genre, and it deflects the most major criticism of the existing political structures to corrupted Irishmen who have remained behind, enriching themselves on the abuse of their brethren. Nonetheless, a serious problem with absentee patriarchalism is diagnosed, and the tremendous power the patriarch can (and, even in abandonment, does) wield over the lives of his subjects is displayed early on. In the indignant Horatio, we trace the beginnings of a rehabilitated Anglo-Irish gentleman who is developing the suitable affection for his new homeland that will simultaneously justify and enable his reformed, benevolent administration.

However, even at this point in the novel, Owenson suggests the limits to what all this fine feeling and well-meaning anger in the heart of her budding patriarch could achieve. As we shall soon see, one central axis along which the possibility of beneficent union fails is Horatio's reduction of Ireland to sentimental trinkets and bits of antiquarian curiosity. But this reductivism occurs even before we read his enraptured accounts of Irish history, relayed in animated conversations with Father John, Glorvina, and the Prince. Consider Horatio's enthusiasm for Irish folk song, discovered as he listens to field hands in the vicinity of his father's estate:

Nothing could be more wildly sweet than the whistle or song of the ploughman or labourer as we passed along; it was of so singular a nature, that I frequently paused to catch it; it is a species of voluntary recitative, and so melancholy, that every plaintive note breathes on the heart of the auditor a tale of hopeless despondency or incurable woe. By heavens! I could have wept as I listened, and found a luxury in tears. (Owenson 27)

Keep in mind that this “hopeless despondency” and “incurable woe” is not (or should not be) an abstraction for Owenson’s hero at this point in his journey. Just a few pages before, he has wandered into a peasant hovel, observed the squalid conditions and naked inhabitants, and ruminated upon the “miserable asylum of human wretchedness – the residence of an *Irish peasant*” (Owenson 20). Lynn Festa has complicated our reading of eighteenth-century sentimentalism’s intersection with imperial ideology, noting that sentimental exchange, particularly through the medium of the sentimental object, actually worked to reiterate the distance between self and other, an essential component of colonial administration and trade.²¹ Here, Horatio’s “luxury in tears” serves much the same function. On the one hand, sympathetic identification with his colonial subjects is the key to correcting the union patriarch’s previous indifference and neglect, and so the novel’s pervasive romanticizing of the Irish landscape and its people aims at a reformist political function. On the other hand, moments such as this demarcate the hard boundaries of that sympathetic identification. Owenson gives us little confidence in Horatio’s understanding of what he is viewing and in his pragmatic concern. Instead, we get the sense that he is reveling in a set piece of delicious feelings. Whereas abject poverty a few paragraphs before had shocked his moral and physical senses, Horatio now allows the beautiful song of the laborer to transform that shock into aesthetic pleasure.

A mere tourist of romantic imagery and fine sentiment is, of course, not what the Irish peasantry require if their lives are to be improved. Owenson soon provides a means of attaching Horatio’s feelings more firmly to the land – Glorvina – but, as I shall illustrate, a subtextual fear

²¹ I am thinking in particular of Festa’s rich chapter on Sterne. Writing of Sterne’s reflections in *The Journal to Eliza* on his portrait of Eliza Draper, Festa argues, “If objects serve to materialize the yearned-for beloved, at times their very materiality renders them intractable. The more Eliza is present, the less malleable she becomes....It is not difficult to suspect that Yorick prefers the portrait because the portrait is more fully his. So arrested is Sterne by the miniature that the woman behind or anterior to it becomes incidental” (Festa, *Sentimental Figures*, 104).

of the limits of this vision of remodeled patriarchy runs throughout the novel. While real-world oppression and abuses fire Horatio's indignation, suggesting the potential for political action to grow out of his developing sympathies, his peripatetic Irish journeys and wooing of a beautiful Irish heroine remain (to Horatio's mind) first and foremost an adventure. Recounting his decision to put on an assumed identity (there is no chance the Prince of Inismore would accept the heir of his ancient enemy within his castle, and certainly not within his family), Horatio explains his motivations and reasoning thusly: "Already deep in adventure, a thousand seducing reasons were suggested by my newly awakened heart, to go on with the romance, and to secure for my future residence in the castle" (Owenson 55). A hero whose central conscious deed is "to go on with the romance" is a relatively common trope of the genre, and it does not necessarily imply that the broader political themes are not to be taken seriously. Indeed, Georg Lukács (and many scholars since) saw the very passivity of Scott's Edward Waverley as crucial to the political project, as it allowed for an exploration of the world-historical's determining of the individual rather than the other way around.²² But whereas in *Waverley* going on with romance serves as a method for transfiguring historical strife into a shared inheritance and, ultimately, as a means for the gentleman-hero to retreat from the stage of history into the placid stasis of domestic order, Owenson, I argue, telegraphs a profound ambivalence with this phrase. While her romance provides space for a vigorous advocacy on behalf of Irish culture and Irish history (apparent not only in the idealized depictions of the ancient nobility but also in the learned discourses upon linguistics, musicology, and anthropology offered by Father John), the insistence upon the tale as romance also erects a clear boundary to union squirearchy as any form of praxis.

²² Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 30-63.

Owenson's project of reeducating and rearticulating the Anglo-Irish patriarch, then, falls somewhere between defiance and resignation. *The Wild Irish Girl* at points effuses great pride in Irish ancestry (not merely that of the West-Country characters but also of Owenson's own familial past) as it recounts the antiquity of Irish scholarship and song, often (problematically) at the expense of Scotland. Yet this current is offset by an abiding sense of loss, one that the overwrought and unsatisfactory ending cannot efface. Much as when Horatio luxuriates in the sad notes of Gaelic song, we get the sense that the Irish histories the Inismore family transmits to the young Englishman are, in fact, becoming antiquarian trinkets to adorn his own baronial hall – the whole of Irish mythology now a beloved curiosity of the foreign occupier. At many points the novel suggests this is the fate of the Inismore family themselves, Glorvina especially:

Nothing can be more delightful than the evenings passed in this *vengolf* – this hall of Woden; where my sweet Glorvina hovers round us, like one of the beautiful *valkyries* of the Gothic paradise, who bestow on the spirit of the departed warrior that heaven he eagerly rushes on death to obtain. Sometimes she accompanies the old bard on her harp, or with her voice; and frequently as she sits at her wheel (for she is often engaged in this simple and primitive avocation), endeavours to lure her father to speak on those subjects most interesting to him or to me; or, joining the general conversation, by the playfulness of her humour, or the original whimsicality of her sallies, materially contributes to the '*molle atque facetum*' of the moment. (Owenson 103)

This scene of enchantment and domestic bliss, to which the bewitching Celtic heroine is central, also becomes a recompense to the Irish chieftain. While in Horatio's rendering, the threatening connotations of a strong and independent Celtic femininity are filtered into erotic attraction, such

moments serve the Prince as a salve for historical loss felt in the world beyond his castle. Horatio writes that, in “domestic joys and social endearments” the Prince “forgets the derangement of his circumstances – he forgets that he is the ruined possessor of a visionary title; he feels only that he is a man – and an Irishman!” (Owenson 103). But on both counts, what the novel (or rather, what Horatio) does with these symbols of proud Irishness challenges the fronted reformulation of union squirearchy. Instead of serving as a hybrid framework in which Irish identity (reified in Glorvina herself) and English masculinity can be joined in felicitous union (the political union of marriage and the political union of the British Isles), Horatio actively works to cancel or, at the very least, contain that identity, behind a harp, within the walls of Inismore Castle.

This is not to suggest that the domestic cannot be, or is not always already, part of political history or that we should only understand Glorvina through the circumscribed role Horatio allows her in his self-account.²³ Instead, I argue that the insistency with which he works to contain those aspects of her identity that might threaten his own masculine (and, almost one-and-the-same here, English) agency and authority works to undermine the benevolent rearticulation of squirearchy at the heart of the novel’s resolution. Moreover, it is difficult to

²³ Thomas Tracy, for one, reads Glorvina’s intellectual and spiritual strength as a constant throughout the novel, arguing that Owenson advances a robust Gaelic, feminine spirit as a method of reforming the historical Anglo-Irish Ascendancy patriarchy. “She thus argues in *The Wild Irish Girl* that the stasis and stagnation pervading Irish economic, political, and social life are produced by an alienating and repressive colonial policy that can and should be replaced by an equal and inclusive union. Horatio and Glorvina’s union represents a moral and psychological breakthrough for each partner, particularly Horatio, whose development continues throughout the novel in historical time. Owenson implies that Ireland will enter a new developmental stage at the commencement of such a union.” Tracy, “The Mild Irish Girl: Domesticating the National Tale,” *Éire-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies*, Spring-Summer 2004 (39:1-2): 90. I do not disagree that this is one possibility the novel suggests. Rather, I argue that *The Wild Irish Girl* is skeptical toward the political resolution it imagines, and the fact that Horatio’s moves deflect the most radical potentials of his story register this skepticism.

read the pages in which the marriage union is effectuated as being altogether free of violence and coercion. The point of Horatio's assumed identity was that he realized the Prince would never accept the descendant of his ancestor's murderer as a friend – much less as a son-in-law. And, although Glorvina (at least the Glorvina Owenson gives us through Horatio's descriptions) appears less implacable on points of history and historical wrong than her father, it seems reasonable that she, too, would object to this subterfuge. I say that it seems reasonable, because she is never truly given a choice or allowed to voice what she does think of her lover's actual identity. Ideally, for the union of Glorvina and Horatio to function as a symbol of the burying of past wrongs in present felicity and amity, he would gain eventual acceptance into the Inismore household as himself. He does not – not while the Prince lives, nor before Glorvina is brought to the most dire of circumstances.

The novel's moment of crisis revolves around a chain of overwrought events, in which Horatio's father (the Earl of M.) is revealed to be Glorvina's intended husband. However, the complexity of the scenario – one driven exclusively by the desires and motives of the two Englishman – underscores the powerlessness of the impoverished Glorvina and her father and thus symbolizes the relative position of the Irish tenantry to their Anglo-Irish lords. The earl is described as acting out of familial guilt and benevolent concern for the dispossessed princess, and, learning of his son's affections for Glorvina, he quickly relinquishes his claim on her hand and admits his true identity. The Prince does not survive the confession of this convoluted plot:

After a long and affecting pause, the prince heaved a deep sigh, and raised his eyes to the crucifix which hung over the altar: the effusions of a departing and pious soul murmured on his lips, but the powers of utterance were gone; every mortal passion was fled, save that which flutters with the last pulse of life in the

heart of a doating father, parental solicitude and parental love. Religion claimed his last sense of duty, nature his last impulse of feeling; he fixed his last gaze on the face of his daughter; he raised himself with a dying effort to receive her last kiss: she fell on his bosom, their arms interlaced. In this attitude he expired.

(Owenson 241)

Thus, instead of the wished-for blessing on the marriage of Irish princess and English hero, Owenson allows Horatio only the Prince's final silence. And, while the novel hints strongly at Glorvina's coming acceptance of (or acquiescence toward) Horatio, her first declaration after the Prince's death is an accusatory demand: "Which of you murdered my father?" (Owenson 242). Owenson does little to soften this sentiment. We get no final declaration of love for her destined husband, but only a surrendering of her will to Father John: "I have now no father but you – act for me as such?" (Owenson 244).

Even absent the death of her beloved father (with whom she had an attachment made all the more intense by their virtual isolation from the modern world), Glorvina's material position is exceptionally weak, a fact which largely occludes her agential capacity in accepting the union Horatio proposes. Just a few pages before the climactic scene in the castle chapel, the Prince's creditors had been pursuing an execution against him – the circumstance that provided the impetus for the Earl of M. to ask for the marriage to be performed immediately. The earl's romantic/sexual interest in Glorvina (and Horatio's to a lesser degree) is thus presented as benevolence, the English patriarch becoming the caretaker of the destitute Irish wife. And yet, much like the Union itself that the marriage reifies at the level of the West-Country estate, a sense of coercion and violence infuses the entire affair. Far from being a marriage of equals (which the Union, if it is to be something other than forceful colonization of the old model, must

maintain itself), the English gentleman takes a Celtic wife who is in no position to refuse him. Miller describes *The Wild Irish Girl* (along with *The Absentee*) as “an inadvertent critique of the Act of Union itself.”²⁴ But I believe this is understating the degree of skepticism, or even cynicism, toward union, at least in Owenson’s case. Retaining the existing squirearchical model of Anglo-Irish/Irish relations while attempting to reenvision the central patriarch as a kindly figure of responsibility and sensibility, the Earl of M. and his son instead suggest the same bloody history that gave them their Irish inheritance to begin with. Much as we have seen throughout this dissertation, an attempt to excise the despotic associations of the old patriarchy from the modern imperial gentleman ends in failure, with the old despot perpetually on the verge of resurgence.

On its face, Edgeworth’s novel comes much closer to offering a program for real-world sociopolitical form than does Owenson’s. Whereas I have suggested the heavy romanticization of *The Wild Irish Girl* indexes the limits of its own patriarchalist vision, *The Absentee* presents very much as a pragmatic vision of how the Ascendancy should structure itself if it is to manage a just and prosperous colonial administration. This is, perhaps, a logical outgrowth of the two Irish writers’ quite divergent politics, since Edgeworth was, throughout her career, much more committed to the unionist cause than was Owenson.²⁵ I will argue that *The Absentee*, too, registers significant anxieties as to the coherence of its own resolution, but first I want to examine one more crucial location in which Owenson’s novel works to undermine the union squirearchy it advances. For it is not only at the domestic level that Horatio appears as a less-

²⁴ Miller, “Acts of Union,” 15.

²⁵ Richard Lovell Edgeworth was a passionate advocate of the 1800 Act of Union, although he voted against it as a member of the Irish parliament because he felt the votes of too many other members had been bought. This brought the family under some suspicion from unionist Protestants, as did his former association with members of the United Irishmen. See Butler, *Maria Edgeworth*, 181-184 for the Edgeworth family and the passage of the Union bill.

than-sufficient revision of the old patriarch. As Kathryn Kirkpatrick notes, Owenson's heavy romanticization of Ireland has long been criticized for promoting pernicious essentialism that was long toxic to any kind of lasting peace – a good/evil, native/foreign binary that, as recently as the 1970s and 1980s, fueled the sectarian divisions that roiled the northern six counties.²⁶ The aggressiveness with which the novel promotes Irish Celtic culture against Scottish Celtic culture (which is presented throughout as a derivative and debased import from ancient Ireland) is often cited as proof of this chauvinism, and this attitude is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in Horatio's foray into the north. While taking note of the thriving economy in the Scots-Presbyterian colony, the hero is also deeply put off by the divergences in national character from that with which he has fallen in love in the south:

Here the ardor of the Irish constitution seems abated, if not chilled. Here the *cead-mile falta* of Irish cordiality seldom lends its welcome home to the stranger's heart. The bright beams which illumine the gay images of Milesian fancy are extinguished; the convivial pleasures, dear to the Milesian heart, scared at the prudential maxims of calculating interest, take flight to the warmer regions of the south; and the endearing socialities of the soul, lost and neglected amidst the cold concerns of the counting-house and the *bleach green*, droop and expire in the deficiency of that nutritive warmth on which their tender existence depends.

(Owenson 198)

In short, Ulster holds nothing to captivate the hero's interest, and he soon heads back to the more enchanting environs of Inismore.

²⁶ Kirkpatrick, introduction, vii-xviii, xiv.

It would be easy to write off such moments in the text as ultra-nationalist propagandizing. Yet the novel also hints at a more nuanced interpretation of the Ulster episode, one that most critics have overlooked. As I have argued, retaining the patriarchal model of Anglo-Irish governance means (for Owenson and Edgeworth) reforming the patriarch at its heart, and in this early national tale, that project manifests as one of reorienting his affections to root him to the Irish landscape. But this project, then, must fail dramatically in Ulster, and fail in a way that suggests the limits of union squirearchy's reparative capacity. The hero's sympathies cannot embrace Ireland in its entirety; there is, in fact, a large portion of the population that must remain beyond the pale of the novel's resolution in romanticized tranquility. Moreover, if we recall the troubling moment in which Horatio is tempted to luxuriate in the aestheticized misery expressed in peasant song, we see this ambivalence toward the project's potentials as something more overt – quite often breaking through the surface and upsetting the fronted meaning of the hero's masculine trajectory. We shall see going forward that these reverberations between a sanguine vision of union under a benevolent patriarch and deep concerns over the form and content of reconstituted patriarchy shape all three novels, and the tensions this oscillation produces helps to illustrate the ideological contradictions inherent in Whig squirearchy.

The Absentee

In form and overall tone, *The Absentee* and *The Wild Irish Girl* differ dramatically, although the central problems they diagnosis in Anglo-Irish patriarchal rule overlap to a great extent. It is not that Irish landlords in these novels are inherently cruel or unfeeling, but rather, that they have allowed themselves to be lured away from their responsibilities and have subsequently been duped by scheming middlemen who have only their own interests (not those

of tenant or master) in mind. Furthermore, life away from their Irish estates, which, as in Owenson, are depicted as the potential sites of virtuous living and right-feeling, has led to a life of dissipation. While his tenants languish under absentee rule, the Anglo-Irish gentleman is sinking further into emasculated dissipation in London. As years pass, the home estates degrade, the landlord sinks deeper into uncontrollable debt, and the possibility of the reparative homecoming diminishes. Thus, rehabilitating the patriarch and ameliorating the condition of the peasantry are, again, coextensive projects. It is true that Lord Colambre's coming-of-age narrative includes little of the heart-pounding romance of Owenson's tale; instead, Edgeworth seduces her absentee landlord back home by developing within him an understanding of prudence and moderation. Where Horatio M. is captivated by minstrelsy and Glorvina's auburn hair, Colambre is captivated by the good sense inherent in the Catholic peasantry and by the prosperity of a well-managed estate.²⁷ However, imbedded within Colambre's education and his father and mother's reformation is a significant ambivalence toward the possibility and efficacy of this model of reform. As this section argues, the country patriarch's sufficiency to anchor the colonial order comes under question even in a text with strongly unionist allegiances.

²⁷ Edgeworth, unlike Owenson, declines to invoke the specter or historical violence that throws into contention Horatio's and the Earl of M.'s legitimacy. This is unsurprising. The Edgeworths were themselves the beneficiaries of colonial violence, as their estate in County Longford (Edgeworthstown) was granted in 1619 by the English crown "in accordance with James I's policy of settling Protestants of English descent on lands confiscated from Irish Catholics" (Butler 13). However, while she does not question the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy's right to rule to nearly the same degree as does Owenson, Edgeworth's novels can be read very much as a rebuke of her ancestors. Edgeworthstown was quite often on the verge of bankruptcy, and many Edgeworths were absentee landlords, including Richard Lovell for much of his early adult life. Maria Edgeworth's first novel, *Castle Rackrent* (1798), had viciously satirized the incompetent drunkenness of vitiated landlords, and absenteeism, of course, is the subject of sustained critique in *The Absentee*. See Butler, *Maria Edgeworth*, 13-77 for a thorough account of the Edgeworth family in Ireland before Maria's birth.

The first glimpses we get of how the absentee family has run afoul occur in England – in London – rather than Ireland. And they occur through an exploration of faulty gentlewomanliness that is corrupting the patriarch who lives away from his native estate. Indeed, Lord Clonbrony (the father of the hero), is an exemplar of defective aristocratic masculinity along multiple axes. For one thing, he has allowed his wife, who is in thrall to a fantasy of making a figure in metropolitan society, to lure him away from where he is needed and where he can thrive (Ireland). But more importantly, once in London, he is soon far too enervated to do anything to right his or his family's condition. Lady Clonbrony is spending money they do not have on expensive furnishings, clothing, balls, and other entertainment, while Lord Clonbrony's apparent wish is to return to the peace of his Irish estate. He cannot bring himself to contradict his wife, so he spends his days attempting to laugh and drink his way into carefree oblivion, notably in the company of another Irish expatriate, Sir Terence O'Fay:

Whilst lady Clonbrony, in consequence of her residence in London, had become more of a fine lady, lord Clonbrony, since he left Ireland, had become less of a gentleman. Lady Clonbrony, born an Englishwoman, disclaiming and disencumbering herself of all the Irish in town, had, by giving splendid entertainments, at an enormous expence, made her way into a certain set of fashionable company. But lord Clonbrony, who was somebody in Ireland, who was a great person in Dublin, found himself nobody in England, a mere cipher in London. Looked down upon by the fine people with whom his lady associated,

and heartily weary of them, he retreated from them altogether, and sought entertainment and self-complacency in society beneath him....²⁸

Percolating throughout this image of the Ascendancy in decline is a familiar eighteenth-century concern about the deleterious effects of metropolitan luxury.²⁹ Lord Clonbrony's debasement is two-fold. For one thing, his reduced stature in London makes clear the relative standing of an Irish estate according to the sociocultural logics of the metropole. But it also reflects the misogynistic trope frequently invoked during the era that women were the primary drivers of the harmful appetite for exotic goods and pleasures. I would argue that Edgeworth is not blaming the corruptions of absenteeism on Anglo-Irish women per se. We should remember that her first novel, *Castle Rackrent*, is a satiric portrait of four, increasingly debased Irish squires whose own cruelty, intemperance, incompetence, or a combination of all three leads them to squander their family fortune. What Edgeworth is instead suggesting is an Anglo-Irish patriarchy that has become *effeminized* through its long exile in a metropolitan world to which it does not belong.³⁰

²⁸ Edgeworth, *The Absentee*, eds. Heidi Thomson and Kim Walker (New York: Penguin Classics, 2000), 21. References are to this edition.

²⁹ Whether the luxuries afforded by empire were a positive or negative development was the subject of intense debate throughout the Georgian period. Bernard Mandeville had famously argued that a prosperous society resulted from all its members pursuing their appetitive drives, which, managed properly, would come into harmony. Others, such as Adam Ferguson, saw modern comforts as the potential downfall of national character: "Luxury, therefore, considered as a predilection in favour of the objects of vanity, and the costly materials of pleasure, is ruinous to the human character; considered as the mere use of accommodations and conveniences which the age has procured, rather depends on the progress which the mechanical arts have made, and on the degree in which the fortunes of men are unequally parcelled, than on the dispositions of particular men either to vice or to virtue." Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, Ed. Fania Oz-Salzberger (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 235. For a thorough history of discourses on luxury, see John Sekora, *Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollett* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

³⁰ On the eighteenth-century dichotomy between femininity, frequently seen as civilizing and moderating, and *effeminization*, or the corruption of gentlemanliness and masculine agency in luxury and dissipation, see E. J. Clery, *The Feminization Debate*. Somewhat paradoxically, what

Together Lord and Lady Clonbrony figure the absurdities and weaknesses of the absentee Irish squire, with Lady Clonbrony registering the felt attractions of a metropole to which they do not and cannot fully belong while her husband indexes the unmanliness that results in the neglect of their ancient estate.

Much as in *Roderick Random*, the scenes of the Clonbronys in London reflect concerns about the performativity of a gendered, national identity, and they lay the groundwork for their son's masculine pedagogy. Indeed, Lady Clonbrony's obsessive courting of the highly prejudiced London aristocracy – whose full acceptance will never come – raises the questions of what, exactly, a proper Ascendancy landlord should look like, in which spheres he should circulate, and how he should interact with his metropolitan peers. The cosmopolitan fluency her son possesses – a performative command which enables him to engage with London society free of the embarrassments and deliberate exclusions that follow his mother – appears in the novel as a distinctly masculine skillset. When he ascends to patriarch status in the new union, London must be, to some extent, Lord Colambre's world, whereas the Irish gentlewoman's sphere is an emphatically bounded Irish domesticity. However, Colambre also refuses to engage with the *bon ton* to nearly the same degree as his mother. Indeed, London society represents an entire state of affectation that directly opposes the honesty and simplicity of the native Irish who eventually capture Colambre's attentions. Lady Clonbrony's gravest mistakes appear to be engaging in a kind of overdetermination in a society that is already wildly overdetermined – where form matters over substance and motives are carefully concealed behind the coded language and rituals of polite society. She is the object of ridicule because of her punctiliousness in carefully adopting the affectations of those whose approval she so desperately seeks:

classed as “effeminate” often contained at its heart what was (at least initially) viewed as hyper-masculine (rakish sexual profligacy, for instance).

‘If you knew all she endures, to look, speak, move, breathe, like an Englishwoman, you would pity her,’ said lady Langdale.

‘Yes, and you *cawnt* conceive the *peens* she *teekees* to talk of the *teebles* and *cheers*, and to thank Q, and with so much *teeste* to speak pure English,’ said Mrs Dareville.

‘Pure cockney, you mean,’ said Lady Langdale.

‘But does lady Clonbrony expect to pass for English?’ said the duchess.

‘O yes! because she is not quite Irish *bred and born* – only bred, not born,’ said Mrs Dareville. ‘And she could not be five minutes in your grace’s company before she would tell you that she was *Henglish*, born in *Hoxfordshire*.’

(Edgeworth 2)

Initially, it appears that Edgeworth may be setting up Lady Clonbrony as a reprise of Fanny Burney’s Madame Duval character – a pastiche of the pretensions of a social-climbing outsider. But despite the running conceit that the family is somehow out of their element in London, and that they would be better off at home in their “native” Ireland, it is soon clear that Edgeworth’s scalpel is directed at metropolitan society itself. The pains to which Lady Clonbrony goes to comport to London vapidty, and the mockery to which she is exposed for her efforts, expose a hard limit to the acceptance an Irish gentlewoman can expect in London. More importantly, however, Lady Clonbrony serves much the same function as the fop of Restoration comedy – illustrating via mimesis the corruption and cruelty of the social sphere she apes.

The differing experiences of mother and son in negotiating aristocratic life in the imperial capital illustrates an important facet of the transnational British typology upon which Edgeworth builds her reformist project: it is a fundamentally gentlemanly figure. Or rather, constructing a

complete Britishness requires reconstituting the patriarch in order to fully cohere. England is pretentiously stifling and dissipated, while Ireland is crumbling under the neglect of its rulers and rapacity of its administrators. Both spaces are in need of moral rehabilitation, and the happy union of metropole and colony the virtuous Lord Colambre will eventually symbolize offers the conceptual structure for effectuating that rehabilitation. But this hybrid identity is not equally attainable by or permissible to all. *The Absentee* suggests Lady Clonbrony (as well as the beautiful and dutiful Grace Nugent, Colambre's cousin and the object of his desire) belong in their Irish estate and nowhere else. Colambre, on the other hand, while strongly drawn to a retired life in Ireland, must remain fluid and mobile, negotiating metropolitan and colonial spheres, first in order to extricate the family from its financial crisis, but later (implicitly) to be an effective advocate for Irish interests under the Union parliament. Despite the fantasy of the bucolic Irish estate as self-contained and self-sufficient, in imperial modernity, it does not and cannot exist in isolation. Edgeworth's novel makes fully clear on a macro level the intricate links of colonial policy (or lack thereof) and its effects on the lives of the Catholic tenantry. Rural retirement to Ireland has a powerful symbolic function, indexing Colambre's virtue and beneficence, but we are made well aware that this premodern function of union squirearchy cannot be fulfilled without an accompanying ultramodern cosmopolitanism.

These two opposing constructions of gentlemanly authority are codependent in Edgeworth's account from the start. Somewhat paradoxically, it is the very cosmopolitanism of his English education that allows Colambre the perspicacity to take stock of their situation in London and understand that retirement to their obligations in rural Ireland offers a cure. Moreover, Edgeworth describes the very hybridity of his development and social position as a necessary feature for producing the benevolent patriarch who will correct the wrongs of absentee

governance. He has been among London high society long enough to see its pretensions and prejudices for what they are – a skill his mother seems incapable of learning and his father incapable of doing anything about. But he also benefits from not being fully Irish. For Edgeworth describes the consequences of a wholly Irish gentlemanly education in terms that evoke Defoe's concerns that colonial conditions and practices could produce colonial tyrants:

Of naturally quick and strong capacity, ardent affections, impetuous temper, the early years of his childhood passed at his father's castle in Ireland, where, from the lowest servant to the well-dressed dependent of the family, every body had conspired to wait upon, to fondle, to flatter, to worship, this darling of their lord. Yet he was not spoiled – not rendered selfish; for in the midst of this flattery and servility, some strokes of genuine generous affection had gone home to his little heart; and though unqualified submission had increased the natural impetuosity of his temper, and though visions of his future grandeur had touched his infant thought, yet, fortunately, before he acquired any fixed habits of insolence or tyranny, he was carried far away from all that were bound or willing to submit to his commands, far away from all signs of hereditary grandeur – plunged into one of our great public schools – into a new world. (Edgeworth 5-6)

Lord Colambre arrives already possessed of a fitting admixture, Edgeworth suggests, of all the qualities a future Anglo-Irish gentleman will need. He must straddle multiple worlds, and multiple ideologies, as he serves his social function of administering British rule of Ireland, linking the narrowly local world of the estate to the broadly imperial world of the metropole. The Irish estate he will govern still abides by the premodern rules of pseudo-absolutist patriarchy, a system that can actually unman the modern gentleman by encouraging the worst,

most despotic of passions within him. To return home successfully, he must learn Whiggish moderation abroad. But he must also possess the innate virtue to resist the vitiating attractions of metropolitan life.³¹

Edgeworth's production of the ideal Anglo-Irish gentleman is immediately tenuous, as is the union squire himself. The dual necessities of remaining firmly anchored in a supposedly ancient locality (the country estate) while also keeping a foot in the global orbits of the modern gentleman eventually push the type beyond its conceptual limits, as we will see most clearly in *Rob Roy*. But even in *The Absentee* – which is the most optimistic portrayal of union squirearchy this chapter discusses – the tensions inherent in this reformulated gentlemanliness are easily observable. Although the novel presents as the fictionalized expression of a reformist programmatic, cataloguing the problems inherent in absenteeism and suggesting a model by which they could be addressed, Edgeworth concedes early on that certain factors lie beyond the purview of masculine pedagogy. As important as Colambre's modern, English education is in developing the sensibility and moderation that will eventually allow him to make amends for the neglectfulness of his father, much (including his love for Ireland) seems to depend on his

³¹ While the mingling of the premodern and modern resonances of union squirearchy is visible in *The Wild Irish Girl*, it is visible mainly as a source of persistent anxiety, as the foundational violence of colonial rule in Ireland is a theme circulating very close to the novel's surface. For Edgeworth, on the other hand, the diachronic nature of these bases of masculine authority is very much part of the hybridity she wishes her budding patriarch to achieve. However, I shall demonstrate that this hybridity remains precarious. Indeed, as Trumpener argues, the central problem facing Ireland is the result of a defective hybridity – a paradigm of capital, represented in the rackrenting practices of the middlemen, merged with a feudal-absolutist system of colonial dominance: “For Edgeworth, as for Radcliffe, the choice is between good paternalism and bad feudalism. Yet the Irish situation is complicated: a peasant culture, already formed and deformed by centuries of feudalism and religious strife, is now suffering anew under capitalist landlords, who exploit their political monopoly of power, rack rents, and expect feudal obedience without assuming feudal responsibility. The country's governors can either allow Milesian and Anglo-Irish castes to continue to grow apart or try, through improvement, to forge a new Union between landlords and tenants” (Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, 139).

“naturally quick and strong capacity, ardent affections.” There is indeed a fixation on premodern, aristocratic notions of legitimacy and consanguinity running throughout *The Absentee* (witnessed, for instance, in Colambre’s horror at his beloved Grace Nugent’s putative illegitimate birth), and we could, perhaps, read these innate characteristics as the inheritance of good birth. And yet so many people of “good birth” – his own mother, his absentee father, most of London aristocratic society – appear sorely lacking in these capacities. There is a strong, latent implication from the very beginning of the novel that Colambre – who will eventually prove the ideal of Anglo-Irish masculinity – cannot be taken in any sense as typical. He receives the hybrid education Edgeworth presents as necessary for producing the benevolent Ascendancy landlord, but neither education nor birth are sufficient to ensure the required outcome. The Anglo-Irish patriarch should possess the old absolutist’s strongly emotional bonds to land and dependent and the modern Whig gentleman’s detached rationality and circumspection. It would seem all too easy for any over-strong infusion to disrupt this careful balance.

These anxieties toward the impending failure of the reformed gentleman are present throughout, generally implicit but bursting out of latency at crucial moments. The novel’s ending leaves Colambre married to Grace (the only ending the novel’s narrative and thematic structure could allow), happily at home in Ireland, with his desire to serve his tenants fueled both by his inner sense of duty and the powerful affective ties he has developed with them and with the country itself. Yet the final words offered by Edgeworth’s narrator are strikingly qualified:

And we leave him with the reasonable expectation that he will support through life the promise of his early character; that his patriotic views will extend with his power to carry wishes into action; that his attachment to his warm-hearted countrymen will still increase upon farther acquaintance; and that he will long

diffuse happiness through the wide circle, which is peculiarly subject to the influence and example of a great resident Irish propriety. (Edgeworth 252)

The narrator's "reasonable expectation" carries with it an ambivalence, because, as the novel has made apparent, abandoning their loving tenantry for the pleasures of the metropole is a pervasive problem amongst the Anglo-Irish elite. Perhaps it is reasonable to assume that Colambre will admirably fulfill the patriarchal role to which he is drawn, but what of the rest of the Ascendancy? The charmingly roguish Larry Brady promises his emigrant brother (working in London – the metropole also exerts a strong pull on the Catholic peasantry, but for wholly different reasons) that "it's growing the fashion not to be an Absentee" (Edgeworth 256), but this reads very much as wishful thinking. Having established Colambre as an almost-paragonic, right-thinking, right-feeling young man who is ideally suited to benevolent patriarchy, Edgeworth has already signaled the limitations of the model the novel proposes. If reforming the Anglo-Irish ruling class depends on the actions of truly exceptional young men – who do, of course, require a proper education but who also must possess a certain innate character sorely lacking in many of their compatriots – that fact would seem to offer little assurance in the possibility or functionality of reform via reformed squirearchy. Indeed, upon learning the extent to which his father's tenants and estate has been degraded, Colambre himself had forcefully denounced the fickle affections and desires of members of his own class: "What I have just seen is the picture only of that to which an Irish estate and Irish tenantry may be degraded in the absence of those whose duty and interest it is to reside in Ireland, to uphold justice by example and authority" (Edgeworth 156). After establishing the unreliability of Anglo-Irish gentlemen, the novel closes by asking us to trust in those very gentlemen to put things to right. Moreover, his wife's name links the happy couple to the decayed state of the Irish Catholic elite and its

troubled history. “Nugent” was a well-known Jacobitical name (and “Grace Nugent” the title of a famous eighteenth-century ballad). The restoration of her lost sociopolitical position simultaneously suggests the restoration of this dispossessed class and a degraded aristocracy.³² There is thus an unmistakable skepticism countering the novel’s cheerful resolution in rehabilitated squirearchy.

But such skepticism (or at the very least, a lack of full faith in the capacity of recuperated gentlemanliness to settle the upheavals of colonial history) is perhaps unavoidable. Edgeworth and Owenson’s novels center on a patriarchalist order that is impossible to sustain. *Rob Roy*, as we shall soon see, is very much a text about the ambivalences inherent in gentlemanly typologies, to the degree that it upsets the carefully-crafted solution to national strife Scott had put forward in *Waverley*. However, before turning to Scott’s novel as a capstone to this dissertation, I want to return to a particularly problematic aspect to Colambre’s *Bildung* narrative, one that amplifies the instabilities suggested in his progress to adult manhood. For Miller, Colambre’s terror at the supposed illegitimacy of Grace Nugent, and the silencing of Grace (very similar to the silencing of Glorvina) at the novel’s end, actually comes to register a fear of Celtic femininity that must be contained. It is, in Miller’s reading, much less the stated concerns of importing a corrupted virtue via the distaff line that move Colambre but rather a fear of that line’s crypto-Catholic roots.³³ But I want to expand upon the disruptions to the novel’s

³² For an account of Grace’s name and its historical connotations, see Kara M. Ryan, “Justice, Citizenship, and the Question of Feminine Subjectivity: Reading *The Absentee* as an Historical Novel,” in *New Essays on Maria Edgeworth*, ed. Julie Nash (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2006), 175-192.

³³ Miller, “Acts of Union, 22. Grace’s mother is a St. Omar, a name associated with the Jesuitical/Jacobitical seminary in France that would also, at the time of *The Absentee*’s publication, have evoked revolutionary Jacobin associations. She is suspected of giving birth to Grace out of wedlock, although the legitimacy of her marriage to “a respectable English officer” (Ibid.) removes the stain upon Grace’s inheritance and Colambre’s fears.

stated themes Miller identifies by suggesting that, even within the misogynist and classist discourse Colambre evokes to justify his conviction that he cannot marry Grace, his own identity and sense of agency is already on shaky ground.

Colambre's punctiliousness derives from a sense of inherited virtue – or, I should say, of inherited honor.³⁴ Despite Grace's spotless reputation, moral probity, and consistent kindness, he fears a stain upon his family's name if he they should marry, a blight passed from mother to daughter independent of individual actions or merit:

Lord Colambre had the greatest dread of marrying any woman whose mother had conducted herself ill. His reason, his prejudices, his pride, his delicacy, and even his limited experience, were all against it. All his hopes, his plans of future happiness, were shaken to their very foundation; he felt he had received a blow that stunned his mind, and from which he could not recover his faculties.

(Edgeworth 107-108)

Reading Colambre's desire for a wife who is not only free of moral blemish herself but whose entire ancestry is likewise free of contamination, it is impossible not to wonder about the deeds of his own ancestors. While the Elizabethan and Cromwellian violence that reduced the Catholic population to their abject state is not referenced directly in this novel (it is much more clearly in view in *Castle Rackrent*, as is the lengthy history of vitiation and cruelty in the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy), the reverberations of this violence underlie the sense that Lord Clonbrony and Lord Colambre are derelict in their duties as absentees. We must, of course, be careful not to

³⁴ An eighteenth-century paradigm shift, with honor (the old model) being the one to which Colambre cleaves. Pocock famously explicated the distinction. In his account, "virtue" is an understanding in a modern credit economy of merit that is the subject of social/market consensus, whereas honor is born with and carried in the (aristocratic) individual. Unlike virtue, it exists independent of social relations and social commerce, and is heritable, not acquired. See Pocock, "The mobility of property," 103-123.

understand Edgeworth as telegraphing these hypocrisies too blatantly. The misogynist trope of sexual scandal's unique permanence in women is longstanding, and it was certainly alive in the long eighteenth century. Yet at the same time, this is a novel predicated on rectifying familial failings through reparable virtue. The vehemence with which Colambre rejects out-of-hand any alliance with Grace while he believes her birth to have been illegitimate strongly evokes the old absolutist rather than the Whiggish man of feeling. One is left with the sense that the ancestral sins Grace represents hit all too close to home for Colambre's comfort. Nor could declining to marry her ultimately keep those ancestral sins at much distance. Grace is, after all, a cousin, and a devoted companion of Lady Clonbrony. Colambre's revulsion, I would suggest, is less directed at Grace herself and more at the weight of historical transgressions she symbolizes in the mind of Edgeworth's budding patriarch.

Nevertheless, *The Absentee* remains much more committed to its vision of union squirearchy than *The Wild Irish Girl*. In Owenson's novel, a critique of patriarchy itself in the near colony goes hand-in-hand with her critique of Anglo-Irish rule and her exploration of the resonances of past violence. Edgeworth on the other hand approaches the ideological instabilities of her resolution subtextually. Although she was far more reformist than many of her Anglo-Irish compatriots, and much more sympathetic to the plight of the Catholic tenantry, it is a deeply traditional framework for reform that *The Absentee* explores. As Edgeworth attempts to deploy the rehabilitated patriarch in the near colony, the novel feels the world shifting under the feet of its union squire. Turning to Scott, we will see the Whig country gentleman teetering upon collapse – committed to past identities that, while no longer operative, still possess great psychological weight, and unsure of how to adapt to the emerging historical moment.

Rob Roy

At the outset of this chapter, I invoked Williams's formulation of the residual and the emergent as a lens for examining the union squire. In Scott's novel, I argue that the residual borders upon the archaic – those socio-cultural beliefs and practices that, in Williams's account, linger in the present as artifacts even though they are unmistakably the property of the past.³⁵ Despite the romantic detachment of Frank Osbaldistone (the novel's protagonist), *Rob Roy* is deeply troubled by the world of the capitalist present than are Edgeworth's and Owenson's texts at their surface levels. It is clear we are meant to come away from the ending with a sense that premodern, Tory/Jacobitical understandings of masculine authority can no longer operate – that they are archaic and slipping into obsolescence. And yet the novel is unable to fully reject those understandings. Instead, they reverberate as impossibilities that fixate Scott's protagonist and the text itself, irresistible dead ends that frustrate masculine development in their stubborn, if rapidly decaying, durability.

Such concerns permeate most of Scott's oeuvre, which manifests as an ongoing project of mediating past traumas in a (hopefully) settled present and figuring out exactly in what form and to what extent historical difference can be retained in a modern, national identity. Even *Waverley*, which critics often take for Scott's historical-novelistic template, problematizes its

³⁵ This is certainly not to say Williams allows past modalities and relationships no impact on the present. Elsewhere, he expounds upon the reception of “the traditional” in modernity: “And then what seems an old order, a ‘traditional’ society, keeps appearing, reappearing at bewilderingly various dates: in practice as an idea, to some extent based in experience, against which contemporary change can be measured. The structure of feeling within which this backward reference is to be understood is then not primarily a matter of historical explanation and analysis. What is really significant is this particular kind of reaction to the fact of change.” Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 35.

own resolution in happy squirearchy (or rather, Anglo-Scottish lairdship).³⁶ As Ian Duncan has noted, *Waverley* registers a sense of profound loss – people, ways of life, and cultures that have succumbed to modern “progress” – in its distillation of history into romance.³⁷ For Edward and Rose’s beneficent union to be completed, and for Edward to assume his patriarchalist, newly-British country seat, the novel must first pile up an unsettling number of corpses. Yes, British modernity might have no place for the brash valor, absolutist command, and tragic allegiances of a Fergus MacIvor, but in his death he takes along with him subaltern characters like Evan Dhu, who have little agency on the broad historical stage but are nonetheless caught in its upheavals.³⁸ But even taking into account these important disruptions to Scott’s vision of union, *Rob Roy* is a much less settled novel, and it rearticulates Scott’s abiding questions in such a way that it causes us to rethink the intersection of gentlemanliness and imperial ideology across Scott’s novelistic corpus. For while a novel like *Waverley* (much as we saw in *The Absentee* and *The Wild Irish Girl*) may remain ambivalent toward its resolution around the edges, *Rob Roy* ultimately lacks confidence in any core meaning to its budding patriarch’s moral and emotional journey. Having consigned an ancient model of gentlemanly authority (the Tory squire) to the past, much more forcefully than does *Waverley*, Scott’s hero is nevertheless powerfully attached to that model as

³⁶ Scott himself encouraged this view of his first novel, for many years writing under the alter-ego of “the author of *Waverley*.”

³⁷ Duncan, *Modern Romance*, 92. See note 9 above.

³⁸ And Evan Dhu is, of course, much more representative of the Highland culture proscribed after the failure of Bonnie Prince Charlie’s rising. Saree Makdisi captures the tension inherent in Scott’s project between an urge to celebrate and retain a lost mode of identity while keeping it from intruding on a progressive modernity: “Thus the novel wants to preserve the Highlands as a site of otherness; but the cost for this – a cost paid neither by the novel nor by its reader – is that their present cannot be admitted into the novel as a presence. *Waverley* thus simultaneously acknowledges the historical transformation of the Highlands, and negates this transformation by keeping the Highland space intact as the space of the past. In other words, it keeps the Highlands ‘alive’ (in the past) by symbolically ‘killing’ them (in the present).” Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and Modernity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 98.

it lies in the grave. It is not merely that *Waverley*'s silenced spaces and modes of authority refuse to be silent (as Duncan correctly argues), their cultural otherness forming a competing narrative to British modernity.³⁹ It is also that the ghosts of Britain's absolutist past, reverberating in the construction of the country gentleman, retain an unsettling hold on the masculine imagination, painfully reopening the question of what it means to be a gentleman of the new order even at the very moment (textually) when this question should be resolved.

At a glance, *Rob Roy* seems to comport to the same narrative model of Owenson's and Edgeworth's national tales. Circumstances compel a young man to set out on a journey into an unfamiliar country that he is ignorant of and actively prejudiced against; along the way, he corrects his misconceptions (here of Scotland rather than Ireland) and matures in the path of virtue toward his ultimate gentlemanly *telos*. Much as in *The Wild Irish Girl*, an alternate possibility of masculine development presents itself and holds some attraction for the young hero, although he is also poised to ultimately reject its model in favor of the modern gentleman we know from the outset he is (or should be) destined to become. There are, however, several important points at which Scott diverges strongly from the two previous texts we have assessed, in ways that render *Rob Roy* a highly restive novel. For one thing, this is the first text we have taken up since *Robinson Crusoe* in which the hero's origins are not aristocratic but bourgeois. Or rather, Frank's understanding of his origins allows him room to claim a footing in two worlds – the premodern, squirearchical hall and the modern world of finance capital. It is true that Frank's ancestry does link back to the Northumberland upper gentry/lower nobility, but his father, William Osbaldistone, departed from that path in disgust. As a young man, he was exiled from the family seat for Whiggish and Dissenting principles that clashed with his family's Tory

³⁹ See note 11 above.

and Catholic alignment. With the life of a country squire closed off as a possibility, William turned his attentions to the metropole and imperial finance capital, and he has made an immense fortune that he hopes (initially) to bequeath to his son. Yet unlike in, for instance, *Roderick Random*, capital is for William its own reward, not the means to purchase back a country patriarch's lost social position. In fact, William regards the life of a successful banker as the highest possible form of masculine identity. The father regards Frank's desire for a classical education and the life of a poet as the surest paths to corrupted politics and dissipated morals: "In the name of common sense! was the like ever heard? — to put yourself to school among pedants and Jacobites, when you might be pushing your fortune in the world!" (Scott 79).

As I have noted above, *Rob Roy* actually transports capital into the realm of romance and heroism, describing early on William's thrills at the ebbs and flows of the market economy or hazarding his credit and fortune on speculative endeavors. But this is a half-hearted effort. While the action and emotional vicissitudes of finance capital partially compensate for the loss of martial valor and chivalric deeds at the center of modern British masculinity, there is little question that the firm of Osbaldistone and Tresham is an important actor in the contemporary world, very much a part of history. By contrast, his brother, Sir Hildebrand is a relic of a past age.⁴⁰ As Scott develops this character of rustic joviality (and imbecility), it is impossible not to trace a lineage from Squire Western in the outlines of this jaunty old patriarch, although Scott

⁴⁰ In this way, *Rob Roy* comes close to reversing a crucial mechanism of *Waverley*, where romance becomes the private inheritance of the private gentleman, who has insured his continued survival by a definitive step out of history. As Duncan puts it, in *Waverley*, history is ultimately left to others who are, in the process, left behind: "The restoration of the ancient hierarchical forms of community occupies a private patriarchal ground of natural human kindness that has resisted the oppressions of an 'external' historical process....The archetype, whose matrix is the modern, private, aestheticizing imagination, is projected through historical process as a recovery from it and an exorcism of the category of history to the negative space of the other, the outside, the past. We have outlived it; it takes place somewhere else" (Duncan, *Modern Romance*, 104).

adds some tragic implications to the Fielding-esque comic type. For Sir Hildebrand is an impotent figure, gregarious and presenting a devil-may-care demeanor, but a symbol of decay and death. He had once, like his brother, been a participant in the spheres of political action, knighted by King James for his support before the abdication. But now, he and his sons (with the partial exception of Rashleigh), exist very much outside history, living in a crumbling ruin of patriarchal authority far from the centers of metropolitan-imperial power:

Notwithstanding his rusticity, however, Sir Hildebrand retained much of the exterior of a gentleman, and appeared among his sons as the remains of a Corinthian pillar, defaced and overgrown with moss and lichen, might have looked, if contrasted with the rough, unhewn masses of upright stones in Stonehenge, or any other druidical temple. The sons were, indeed, heavy unadorned blocks as the eye would desire to look upon. Tall, stout, and comely, all and each of the five eldest seemed to want alike the Promethean fire of intellect, and the exterior grace and manner, which, in the polished world, sometimes supply mental deficiency. (Scott 109-110)

It is clear this moldering wreck is not long for this world, and his sons – the debased progeny of an expiring historical type – are certainly not in a position to rehabilitate Tory squirearchy.

Waverley's final retirement to Tully-Veolan demarcated a settlement, with historical strife buried in a union marriage. The Northumberland Osbaldistones' isolated existence rather seems a forcible banishment from history. Though Frank has revolted from his father's world of markets and capital, and while he is seeking out a different developmental trajectory from that William took in his own rebellion, Sir Hildebrand cannot be his model of masculine authority.

Or can he? Indeed, Frank does not seem able to move beyond Tory patriarchy either. When the '15 and its aftermath kills off Sir Hildebrand and his sons, Osbaldistone Hall becomes his inheritance, and, while lamenting the painful associations it holds (not the least the apparent loss of Die Vernon), the Hall fixates Scott's hero, reorienting his *telos* from London commerce (to which he is allegedly headed) to his ancestral countryside. Partially, this is due to the painful associations Osbaldistone Hall holds with Die herself, Frank's love interest and one of only two inhabitants of the manor who appears to possess any kind of meaningful capacity for action. But I also argue that the enchanting and elusive Die Vernon comes to symbolize Frank's pursuit of the old patriarchy itself, and the degree to which his final winning of her hand is left hastily concluded and unsatisfactory registers the impossibility of squirearchical masculinity.

For Diana, who is by far the most perspicacious and able member of the Northumbrian household, also strives to embody the ideologies of honor, bloodline, and duty on which premodern patriarchy depends. While their isolation degrades the masculine authority of her cousins – leaving them fit only for drinking and fox-hunting – it is that very isolation that has allowed Die to develop competencies, confidence, and interests surpassing the narrow sphere typically allowed to feminine gentility in novels of the long eighteenth century. She is, as she puts it “ignorant of what the Spectator calls the softer graces of the sex” (Scott 113). And she is exceptionally far along in the education of a gentleman:

“As I learned out of doors to ride a horse, and bridle and saddle him in case of necessity, and to clear a five-barred gate, and fire a gun without winking, and all other of those masculine accomplishments that my brute cousins run mad after, I wanted, like my rational cousin, to read Greek and Latin within doors, and make my complete approach to the tree of knowledge, which you men-scholars would

engross to yourselves, in revenge, I suppose, for our common mother's share in the great original transgression." (Scott 154)

The "masculine accomplishments" which Sir Hildebrand's sons possess are, in fact, in the process of losing their significance. They evoke the premodern, chivalric paradigm of heroic masculinity, which has no place in imperial reality. Even though the classical education Rashleigh gives her is a little dated, and more than a bit Papist (the Dissenting William Osbaldistone has no time whatsoever for Frank's desire to study what he considers the useless, wildly esoteric arts of Latin and Greek), but it is far closer to the gentlemanly pedagogical model needed to negotiate the eighteenth-century world than that her other cousins have pursued. After all, although the Old Pretender's rising will kill off Sir Hildebrand and his sons without much notice of their actions in support of the cause, Die and Rashleigh are deeply involved in the political machinations at its heart. And Die often appears much better able to extricate Frank from dangerous situations than Frank himself, materializing as if out of nowhere to aid him when he is captured by government forces (under incorrect assumptions of treason) deep in the Highlands, and disrupting Rashleigh's machinations against him.

As Alexander Welsh argued decades ago, Diana is a deeply familiar character in Scott's novels. Generally, the hero is torn between two objects of desire, although the choice between them is never truly in his fully control. There is (in Welsh's formulation) the "brunette," the powerful if endangered beautiful woman of Catholic/Celtic origins who sparks the more intense erotic charge in the hero. It is the very masculinized nature of her foreign femininity that captures the hero's heart, even as it makes her an impossible choice for a wife. She is ultimately far too threatening to his own inner stability, both along the axis of gendered performance and because she is almost always subject to historical forces that will bring about the extinction of

her people. Instead, Scott gives his hero a secondary choice, almost invariably a blonde (evoking an old-English or Saxon character), who is the demure, submissive, and much more proper choice for a romantic partner. In effect, the hero's desire bifurcates, with erotics and intellectual attraction drawn toward the forbidden Celt while a sense of social duty and safety draws his desire toward the Briton.⁴¹ At least, this is Welsh's account, which does seem to accurately catalogue Scott's basic forms of feminine gentility. Notably however, in *Rob Roy* there is no blonde. There is only Die, who for most of the novel seems hopelessly out of reach, promised to either the convent or one of Sir Hildebrand's sons by her Jacobitical and tyrannical father. And, infuriatingly and heartbreakingly for Frank, Diana's own sense of duty is very much that of the old patriarchy; whatever her desires for Frank, she will not disobey her father. However, it is also the very precariousness of her situation that adds an element of distress, allowing the romance-plot to reemphasize her femininity and blunt some of the masculinized characteristics that both attract and threaten Frank's own sense of authority and command.

Rob Roy departs from the generalization Welsh draws by retaining its brunette heroine, although in a silenced form, with men (her father and then Frank as narrator) speaking for her. The challenge her form of womanhood presents to Scott's hero is thus countered by denying Diana a voice. Yet the urgency and hastiness with which her voice is excised from the text's final chapters suggest both the instability of Frank's own masculine sense of self and the instability of the novel's resolution more broadly. When Frank returns after his uncle's will is read to take possession of his country seat, he discovers that Diana and her father have taken refuge at Osbaldistone Hall as proscribed persons following their involvement in the rebellion. Although seeing her reignites Frank's passions anew, she never utters a word, nor does she for

⁴¹ Welsh, *The Hero of the Waverley Novels* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 70-82 especially.

the remainder of the novel. We learn that, after their escape, she enters a French convent, to which Frank pursues her, but note how nebulously their marriage is consummated and how Die is finally dispatched from the text: “How I sped in my wooing, Will Tresham, I need not tell you. You know, too, how long and happily I lived with Diana. You know how I lamented her. But you do not – cannot know, how much she deserved her husband’s sorrow” (Scott 452). Frank immediately follows this revelation by declaring that “I have no more of romantic adventure to tell” (ibid.). Despite Frank’s reconciliation with his father, and the fact that the narrative has been building toward a seeming reinstallation of the prodigal son in the great Osbaldistone and Tresham counting house, we instead are left with the strong impression that Frank does not follow William. He has his father’s blessing, but Frank remains something of an enigma to the great financier, who remarks only that he “little thought a son of mine should have been Lord of Osbaldistone Manor, and far less that he should go to a French convent for a spouse” (ibid.). Indeed, the novel’s determination to not allow Frank to pursue his father’s life is so strong that it upsets the conventional telos of a flight to the convent – which should not, by generic expectations, allow Diana to return with Frank to the modern world.

But we also know where this alternate path of masculine development should end – in ruins, in tears, and in death. Frank’s need to silence Diana, to finally gain control over those simultaneously alluring and dangerous elements of her aberrant femininity, is also his need to gain control over the historical modality she represents. Despite his early contempt for the male denizens of Osbaldistone Hall, the lordship of the manor ultimately holds a profound dominance over his imagination and self-conceptualization. Even before he realizes that obtaining Diana for a wife will be a possibility (he thinks she is long fled to France, and believes her father to be her husband before he meets them in the Hall’s library), he is drawn back to the crumbling estate to

assert his claim to it. Yet Frank also betrays deep anxieties about what assuming this position, “Lord of Osbaldistone Manor,” will mean. The old Tory patriarch is a false start, a paradigm that has registered as obsolescent since the first appearance of the drunken squire and his boorish sons. He has, through Die’s romantic/quasi-tragic devotion to its ideals, perhaps attained a kind of nostalgia in place of its previous absurdity, something of the Jacobite Highlanders’ “singular and disinterested attachment to the principles of loyalty which they received from their fathers” that Scott had lamented in *Waverley*’s famous postscript, even as he consigned such attitudes into necessary oblivion.⁴² However, we also know clearly that Osbaldistone Hall and its squire has little place in post-1688, Whig-capitalist modernity. If the fitting place of the young gentleman is in the centers of imperial power, Northumberland squirearchy represents a faulty trajectory. But Frank has no desire to join the metropolitan world, which appears just as repellent at the novel’s end as at the beginning. In silencing Die, Frank attempts to evade the painful recognition of the residual becoming archaic becoming obsolete. He ends his narrative unwilling to comport to his father’s model of imperial masculinity, unable to step into Sir Hildebrand’s model of premodern patriarchy, and deeply ambivalent about the content of his own gentlemanly identity.

Of course, Frank has another figure of masculine agency in view, one that shadows the edges of the narrative. The eponymous Highland brigand, Rob Roy MacGregor, likewise refuses the terms of British modernity, but unlike Sir Hildebrand and his sons, he appears to thrive despite being increasingly at variance with the emerging world of global power and capital.⁴³ It

⁴² Scott, *Waverley* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 492.

⁴³ It is at times hard to reconcile the absence of the Highlander from a novel that seemingly should feature him as the protagonist. In his introduction to the Oxford edition of *Rob Roy*, Duncan memorably quips, “For much of the book it seems that Scott must have agreed to call it

is true that he thrives under proscription. He is an outlaw hunted by the Duke of Montrose, his family (particularly his wife) brutalized, and even his clan name forbidden. But Rob Roy is also resilient, constantly outmaneuvering his foes, keeping together a fiercely loyal if rather motley set of retainers, and fearlessly venturing into hostile spaces, including Glasgow's jail, even while he stands attainted for numerous acts of blackmail and cattle thievery. Erin Mackie has shown how explorations of criminality allowed eighteenth-century constructions of masculinity to retain the absolutist prerogative of the old, aristocratic order (albeit in proscribed form). Her account is helpful to consider here, because it seems as if Rob Roy could serve a way of keeping alive the power and authority once associated with premodern patriarchy but that the enervated Sir Hildebrand can no longer command.⁴⁴ This would be a very late moment for the heroicized criminal to reappear, as he was a type that had largely faded from prominence by the second half of the eighteenth century.⁴⁵ And yet he clearly holds a profound pull over Frank's psyche, representing an alluring possibility of masculine authority, if one that is likewise a dead end.

A dead end for Frank, in any case. Duncan's argument that *Rob Roy* articulates primitive spaces existing synchronically to imperial modernity even as they resist modernity's terms is, I think, persuasive. For instance, while the Highlanders in the final pages of *Waverley* are headed for the gallows at Carlisle, Rob Roy remains free, and will until his death (as the novel reminds

Rob Roy mainly in order not to have to call it *Francis Osbaldistone*." Duncan, introduction to *Rob Roy*, by Sir Walter Scott (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), xiii.

⁴⁴ Of "culturally mythic types" such as the highwayman and the pirate, Mackie writes, "Their capacity to accommodate this ideological contradiction and, even more, the degree to which their status as culturally mythic characters depends on that accommodation, distinguishes the rake, the pirate, and the highwayman from the police modern gentleman with whom, nonetheless, they are enlisted, if more surreptitiously, in cultural work on behalf of patriarchal power" (Mackie, *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates*, 23).

⁴⁵ Mackie traces his final suppression to the radicals of the 1790s, notably Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, where the aristocratic ideology that rakes and highwaymen embodied was rejected wholesale. Of course, Scott's politics were quite far from Godwin's, particularly after the French Revolution. See *ibid.*, 179-191.

us). In fact, he scornfully rejects Bailie Nicol Jarvie's well-meaning offer to take his sons into apprenticeship so that they can avoid the Highlanders' wild lifestyle: "'*Ceade millia diaoul*, hundred thousand devils!' exclaimed Rob, rising and striding through the hut. 'My sons weavers!—*Millia molligheart!* but I wad see every loom in Glasgow, beam, traddles, and shuttles burnt in hell-fire sooner!" (Scott 397-398). This is obviously a sentiment that Frank can applaud, but Rob is able to maintain an existence outside the boundaries of modern capital (a paradigm which is so oppressive to Frank's desires) to a degree that the young Mr. Osbaldistone, even if he retreats into squirearchy, never can. The Highlanders, as Duncan argues, remain stubbornly anti-modern, but also stubbornly extant, refusing both incorporation into an emergent Britishness and appropriation into shared national history as Scott had attempted in *Waverley*.⁴⁶ But we must also remember that this independence has a time limit, which Scott's 1817 readers surely knew.⁴⁷ The clan system was broken after the '45, and by the Regency, the people of the Highlands were being forcibly removed in the Clearances, a process driven primarily by Lowland Scottish landlords who realized the territory held more value as grazing land than as tenant farms.⁴⁸ Indeed, while the novel's ending reminds us of Rob's quiet death, much on his own terms, Scott's 1829 introduction lays out the degradation, poverty, and obscurity awaiting Rob's sons in latter part of the eighteenth century – facts anticipated by the good Bailie's warning to Rob about the fate the Highlander's sons are likely to face without a modern education and occupation. The Highland brigand is never truly a possible model of masculine agency and authority for Frank, cloaked, as he is, in otherness and impenetrability. But he also represents another kind of death, another foreclosed possibility for premodern patriarchal

⁴⁶Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, 107-115.

⁴⁷ See Scott, *Rob Roy*, 5-53 where he gives a lengthy biography of Rob Roy's subsequent life, the sad fate of his sons, and the destruction of the Highland Clan system.

⁴⁸ For an excellent and concise history of the Clearances, see Prebble, *The Highland Clearances*.

ideology, different in both surface and interior from Sir Hildebrand but just as closed off to the modern hero.

Such characterological collapse is why I take *Rob Roy* to be such an unsettled exploration of masculine typology, and it finally appears to have little confidence in any construction of masculine agency. It is fully alive to the complexities and upheavals of history, and Scott remains very much committed to the project of imperial modernity. Frank's wanderings into the north of England, the Borders, and the Scottish Highlands are (much as *Waverley's* journey) a source of the base material for producing the union squire, burying past trauma in a romanticized history and domestic felicity. Yet his final social position is ambivalent, with squirearchy seemingly a relic that nonetheless holds tremendous sway over his self-conception and the novel's presentation of gentlemanly authority. It is a *telos* far removed from the centers of imperial power, and the novel's end is pervaded by an abiding sense that the metropole is the appropriate sphere for the mature British gentleman. However, that sphere is always unsatisfactory, felt as a hostile force that works to negate his own possibilities of self-fashioning. There is, of course, a clear contradiction at the heart of this dilemma, one that has run through all of the masculine figures this dissertation has assessed. In reacting to the constraints on gentlemanly authority represented in modernity and capital, the young gentleman is drawn to a model of masculine agency that is itself deeply oppressive. And in *Rob Roy*, it is a model that is dying – perhaps already dead. Finding this conceptual collapse at the very moment union squirearchy was being deployed with such urgency to anchor a national identity coming into being registers profound instabilities in the imperial self-conception that Scott's novel opens up, even as it moves to bury them.

In framing the question of how masculinity was constructed in the long eighteenth century primarily through the lens of gentlemanliness, this dissertation has attempted to show how instabilities and anxieties permeated this project at the level of the most authorized, hegemonic types. And it has also sought to demonstrate the hold premodern patriarchy continued to have upon conceptions of masculine authority, long after the social and political paradigm in which that ideology took root had been rendered impossible and obsolete in imperial modernity. The disruptive effect of patriarchal resonances in gentlemanly trajectories of the new Whig order is palpable across the texts I have discussed, as it threatens to short-circuit the virtuous, Whig-liberal, and meritocratic hero that was a key component of the emerging British-imperial order's self-conception. But its long afterlife also sheds light on the fears that emerging order produced. Deployed as a symbol of order, stability, and tradition, the Regency's union squire attempts to anchor a fractious and shifting sociopolitical landscape, but he ultimately registers the incapacity of gendered authority to account for and contain imperial realities.

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